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THE SQUAW SPY:

OR,

THE RANGERS OF THE LAVA-BEDS.

BY CAPT. CHAS. HOWARD.

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THE SQUAW SPY; OR, THE RED RIVER RIFLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE LONE CABIN.

It was Christmas eve—Christmas eve in the wilds of Minnesota, along the banks of the far-famed Red River of the North. Judging from the altitude of the moon, I came to the conclusion that it was past the hour of eight, no very pleasant prospect for one who had lost his way in a strange country.

The night was bitter cold. The west wind, as it went sweeping through the leafless pines and over the frozen snow, chilled me through, despite the thick dress of fur in which I was enveloped from head to foot.

Feeling exhausted—for I had tramped through the pathless woods since early forenoon—I seated myself on the snow-covered trunk of a fallen tree, and at once gave way to my thoughts. What was to be done? Should I collect a pile of dry brushwood, set fire to it, and remain all night in the forest?

Much as I dreaded the idea, I felt certain that was the plan I would have to adopt. It was not the cold that I dreaded. There was dry wood to be had around me by the cords, and it only wanted a few sparks to kindle it into flame.

No. As the night advanced, the silence of the dismal forest was broken ever and anon by a loud, deep howl. It was the ever terrible cry of the gray wolf!

This it was that caused me to tremble, for I knew that the wolf prowls throughout the night in search of prey, and, in winter, when driven oftentimes frantic with hunger, he is a far

more formidable enemy than even the fierce Ojibwah. I had heard from frontiersmen that the wolf would sometimes enter a village, and woe to any one who might happen to come across him, for the animal would pounce upon the unfortunate villages with as much boldness as if the victim was a lamb. After concluding these any thing but cheering reflections, I was in the act of rising to my feet, when a howl, different entirely from that of a wolf, caused me to listen intently. I was presently rewarded by hearing the sound again. It sounded like the cry of a dog in pain.

"Thank Heaven!" I ejaculated. "If it is a dog, of course the owner won't be far off."

Grasping my rifle, which I had rested against the log on which I had been seated, I started off in the direction of the sound on a swift run. I forgot the cold—forgot everything save the animal whose cries I could hear plainer at the end of every rod of ground I passed over.

I must have run for nearly half a mile, when a dark object in the snow, creeping slowly along, caused me to come to a walk. Again the cry which had first attracted my attention broke forth. I had not been mistaken. The animal was a dog.

The poor brute was limping along on three paws—the other, covered with blood, dragging behind. Every step gave rise to a yelp of pain.

I gave a slight whistle. The dog stopped, and looked round. It was a noble-looking brute—half mastiff, half bulldog.

His eyes no sooner fell upon me, than the animal gave vent to a low growl. Nothing daunted by this, however, I continued to approach, speaking words in a friendly tone. Seeing this, the dog lay down, and began to whine and slightly wag his tail. I approached until I could touch the poor creature, then stretched out my hand and patted him on the head. He met my advances with a pleased look; and this encouraged me to kneel down and examine his wounds.

It was evident that the weapon that had produced these must have been a hatchet. On his flank was a deep, ugly gash, some two or more inches in length. Further down, near the joint of the dog's leg, was another gash, but neither as long or as deep as the former.

After ascertaining these facts, I rose to my feet, and looked toward the direction the dog had been taking. Thanks to the light the moon gave forth, I could perceive that the animal had been following a track, and that track, beyond a doubt, was his own. Again stooping down, I seized the wounded animal in my arms. He made no objections to this, for he saw by this time that I felt inclined to be his friend.

The huge fellow was a heavy burden, but I would not have left the poor brute behind for a fortune. I felt certain that his home was not far off, and the track that I was following would lead me to it.

I walked on for nearly three-fourths of a mile, then I was forced to lay the animal down, and take a few moments' rest.

This being done, I again took up my wounded companion, and proceeded along as before. Another half-mile passed over and I suddenly found myself in close proximity to a low, dark-looking structure which, on further inspection, proved to be a log cabin. The dog seemed to know the place, for he gave vent to a yelp of pleasure.

At one end of the cabin, towering a few feet above the roof, was an immense chimney, peculiar alone to frontier cabins, out of which issued a volume of smoke. This, to me, was a welcome sight, for it denoted what warmth there was within the cabin.

I stepped up to the rude door, and knocked. There was no answer. Again I knocked; the result was the same as before. Perhaps the owner was out.

Knowing that this was likely, I made bold to attempt to open the door. I succeeded; and, without delay, I entered the cabin.

It was as I had anticipated; the owner was out, probably in quest of something that would serve for his evening meal. In one end of the room was a huge fire-place; upon which had been placed a huge log. This was ablaze, and it served to give both light and warmth.

The room contained besides a number of chairs—which had once served to adorn the parlor of some aristocratic merchant in the East—a finely finished mahogany bureau, and a table. Upon the latter were scattered a few volumes of books, some old and worn, some finely bound.

But what most attracted my attention was : upon three sides of the cabin walls were hung up a large number of pipes, of every size, shape and color. There were among the number, pipes from France, from Russia, from Turkey, the china pipe of Germany, the pipe of the American savage, side by side with the elegant and costly meerschaum.

"But the owner? Who and where could he be? Why were such things in a place like this?"

Such were the questions I put to myself, as I placed the wounded dog where he could receive the warmth of the fire. Pulling a piece of linen forth, I tore it into a few strips, and at once proceeded to bind up the animal's wounds.

Hardly was the operation commenced, when I heard the door of the cabin softly opened, and a footstep on the threshold. I looked behind me. Instead of seeing the figure of a man, as I had expected, I saw standing near the half-closed door the outlines of an Indian—a squaw. Like me, no doubt, she had lost her way, and entered the cabin for the sake of warming her chilled limbs.

I rose to my feet. The dog gave vent to a fierce growl, and, but for the injuries he had received, he would have sprung forward.

"Pale-face," said the Indian woman, before I had time to advance a step, "Waunona is cold. She would tarry awhile by the pale-face's fire."

I perceived that by her voice, she was very cold—cold almost to freezing. Accordingly, I bade her approach the fireplace, and placed a chair for her to seat herself upon. She did so, and then produced from beneath her blanket a very small Indian child. I pitied it. Its hands were blue with the cold, which the young squaw—she could not have been over twenty-five years of age—tried to warm by chafing in her own.

During all this, the dog had kept up a constant series of fierce growls. Once the woman looked at the animal, and never shall I forget the expression of her face.

That looked was enough to convince me that *it was her who had given the dog his wounds.*

I began to feel uneasy. What if the owner should return? Would he act friendly to the squaw, should he discover that

she was the cause of his noble animal's frightful wounds? It was any thing but likely that he would.

"Waunona," I said, calling her by the name she had given me, "the dog of the pale-face is angry."

The woman did not reply; and this served only to deepen the impression I had formed.

"Speak!" I continued. "Do not fear me. I am your friend."

"Listen, then. The pale-face is young. Waunona will trust him. To-night, before the moon came up, Waunona was near the cabin of the pale-face, cold and hungry. The dog frightened her, and she ran like the deer. The dog of the pale-face found where she was hid, and but for Waunona's hatchet, she would have now been in the happy hunting-grounds."

"Where are your people?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"Waunona is a Sioux," she said. "She lives not with her people. Her husband is a great chief—the greatest of the Ojibwahs!"

She said this, in a voice filled with pride. I inquired her husband's name.

To my surprise, I learned that it was Zach-o-kana, the Red-ax, who, reputation said, was the steadfast friend of the frontiersman, and one of the noblest red-men who ever drew a bow or wore a moccasin.

"Waunona," said I, more than ever interested in the squaw, "I am not the pale-face who owns this cabin. The dog you have wounded is not mine. When his owner returns, I fear that he will harm you. You had better fly at once. I say this because I am your friend."

Much as I hated to speak these words, I felt that it was my duty to do so. Why, I know not.

The squaw understood me. She clasped the child to her, enveloped herself once more in her blanket, and strode toward the door.

"The Red-ax waits for me," she said. "Waunona can find him. Pale-face, farewell!"

With these words, she opened the cabin door, and stalked proudly away.

CHAPTER II.

REEVES, THE RECLUSE.

I took the seat the squaw had just vacated, and sat patiently awaiting the owner of the cabin.

Half an hour or so must have elapsed, when the reverie into which I had fallen was interrupted by a slight growl from the dog. Soon I heard footsteps outside. The door of the cabin was opened, and the owner stood before me.

He was the first to speak.

"Ha! sir. Unexpected, but none the less welcome."

"But for a misfortune which has happened to your faithful dog," I said, meeting half-way his friendly advances, "I should probably not have had the pleasure of meeting you. I had lost my way, and was on the point of giving way to despair, when I heard your dog howl. I ran to him, and found him very much hurt."

Uttering a low and peculiar whistle, my host approached the dog, and examined his wounds.

Then he rose to his feet, his looks and bearing entirely changed. His face was pale as ashes, and his teeth clenched. His eyebrows were contracted, until they met, but when he spoke, his voice was calm and collected.

"I value that dog," he said, "more than all the rest of my possessions. He was given to me by a dying brother, and I would not have had what has been done to him, happen for a hundred guineas."

"It was evidently done with a hatchet," said I.

"No," he replied, "it was done with an Ojibwah pong-osh, a weapon carried only by the squaws. How far, sir, was it from here, that you found my poor animal?"

"As near as I can judge, it was over a mile and a quarter."

"Indeed! Is it possible that he crawled so far in the fearful condition that he is? This afternoon I walked over to the settlement, leaving Hannibal"—the dog—"in charge of the cabin. Some prowling savage must have been around, and the dog attacked him."

"No doubt," I answered. "As I said before, I heard the poor animal's cries, and ran to him. Finding him hurt, as you perceive, I carried him here.

He grasped my hand warmly, and replied :

"Sir, I shall never forget your kindness."

He released my hand, and striding toward a corner of the cabin, seized a richly-finished rifle. Then, intimating to me his intention, he stepped toward the door. I grasped my own rifle, and followed him, desirous of seeing if the Indian woman's whereabouts would be discovered. If so, I knew that her life would not be worth a moment's time. Educated as my new friend undoubtedly was, he possessed, when angry, the ferocity of a tiger.

We passed outside. The moon was in the mid-heavens and by her light my companion could track the foot-marks in the snow as easily as if it were day.

The first tracks he scrutinized were my own ; but, before long his eyes detected those made by the squaw.

"It is as I said," he said to me. "The Indian has been here."

We followed the tracks for upwards of a mile. Here the trail came suddenly to an end. The spot was in the locality of several huge pines, the trunks of several fallen trees, the latter nearly concealed by snow and a thick growth of underbrush.

"It is singular," said my companion, "where the Indian who made the trail we have been following, could have disappeared to. Depend upon it, sir, the Indian we are after is no fool at the business."

While my companion was searching among the bushes, I employed myself in a like manner, with, however, a far different intention than his.

Before long, my attention was drawn to a large tree which had fallen to the ground. Approaching this, I bent down and closely scrutinized it. The trunk was covered with snow and this easily enabled me to see that the crust of it had been broken by a light footstep, and, too, but a short time before.

Keeping along close to the tree, I presently found myself descending into a kind of hollow in the snow-covered ground. Here the footprints left the tree, and were to be seen on the

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Keeping along close to the tree, I presently found myself descending into a kind of hollow in the snow-covered ground. Here the footprints left the tree, and were to be seen on the

ground again. I kept on for a few paces further, then a pile of brushwood, covered with snow, obstructed my path.

Quick as a flash of lightning, my eyes detected an object half concealed there. Cautiously approaching a few steps nearer, I obtained a better view. It was an Indian squaw. She was crouching down in an attitude of fear, and as I neared her, she uttered a slight exclamation.

I raised my hand and pointed in the direction of my companion, who was still engaged in beating among the brushwood not a dozen rods away. She understood me ; and, turning quickly on my heel, I left the spot.

"Well," said my companion, "I can discover no further traces. It is very cold, and we had better return."

Nothing loth, I consented, inwardly thinking that the woman might thank her stars that it was I, and not my still angry friend, who had discovered her retreat.

A word from me, and her doom would have been sealed ; but that word I would not have spoken for untold riches. Something told me that I should yet be rewarded, though at that time I could not possibly conceive in what manner.

We were not long in reaching the cabin ; and, while enjoying the warmth emitted by the huge fire, I learned my host's history, which was substantially as follows :

His name was Frederic Reeves, and by birth and education, was an Englishman. He was about thirty years of age, and for the last five years had been an occupant of the lonely cabin, with only one companion, his dog. He informed me that he had been a student at Oxford, but, for some misdemeanor, had been expelled. Being an orphan, and in the possession of a considerable fortune, he resolved to come to America. He carried out his intention, and chance brought him to the Red River of the North ; and, being struck by the wildness and beauty of this region, of which mankind knows so little, he resolved to make it his home.

In appearance, Reeves was tall, well-built, with finely-formed features, a face kept smooth by constant shaving, and hair of a dark-brown hue. His dress was that of a frontiersman, but elegantly ornamented.

After narrating the general outlines of his history, my host brought from a small back room a huge haunch of veni-

son. This was placed over the fire. The sight of the savor roast only rendered my sharp appetite still more acute.

"This is Christmas eve," Reeves remarked; "the night, as Shakspeare says, 'when no spirits dare stir abroad.' I love Christmas!" he continued. "It has ever been my rule to enjoy myself on that day, wherever I have been. To-morrow I am to have a regular backwood feast here, and I can promise you a fine time, if you will accept my invitation to share it."

The invitation was accepted at once.

"Most of the settlers will be here," my host continued, "as well as a number of trappers and hunters. According to the programme I have arranged, the order of the day will be hunting, shooting, feasting, and ending with a regular breakdown dance. Ha! sir, it takes these forest-raised lasses to 'trip the light, fantastic toe.'"

The roasting of the venison was no sooner concluded, than we attacked it at once, the keen air having sharpened our appetites wonderfully. This was followed by a cup of excellent coffee, and then our repast was ended.

We sat conversing and smoking for an hour longer; then, enveloping ourselves in a blanket each, we lay down before the fire and slept.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

By nine o'clock, or soon after, the following morning, the invited guests began to assemble. An hour later a goodly company of men, women and children, settlers, hunters and trappers, numbering at least fifty in all, had gathered, bent upon the one purpose of enjoying themselves.

"My friends," said the host, when all had assembled, "we will drink to our good fortunes for the coming year, and after that we will leave the fair ones in charge of the cooking department, and *we* will take to the woods until the Christmas-horn shall summon us to the feast. "Remember," he added, with a merry laugh, "the one whom Fortune favors most in the chase, shall be placed at the head of the table, with the two prettiest lasses in the company at his right and left hands."

A bowl of steaming punch was taken from the fire. Each of the company drank a small portion, then the men seized their rifles, and, with many a laugh and shout, plunged into the woods.

Hardly had an hour elapsed since the sun had passed the meridian, when the shrill blast of a horn echoing through the forest warned the hunters that their feast was ready.

Half an hour later, and the space of ground in front of the cabin presented a no less singular than unusual appearance. Those of the guests who had taken part in the chase had returned, each showing what his success had been by the game he had taken. Some had returned with as many as three or four magnificent wild turkeys, some with a number of rabbits, squirrels and partridges, others with a deer, each.

These had all been laid out on the frozen snow, the hunters waiting for their host to decide which had won the seat of honor.

The last one to arrive on the scene was an old trapper.

He was a man yet in the prime of life, small-statured, and whose features were more than half-concealed by a thick beard, and an oddly-shaped fur cap.

As the trapper stepped into the clearing we saw that he carried on his shoulders an object covered with thick, shaggy hair. We recognized it at once. It was a bear of large size, and the weight of which caused the trapper, strong as he was, to bend beneath it.

"Wagh!" he said, as he deposited the animal on the snow. "Thet feller gave this coon a hard tussle, he did. 'Thar wuz two o' the varmints, but I kind o' concloded thet one w'u'd do."

It was decided at once that to the trapper belonged the honor of occupying the head of the table. But, on being made acquainted with this fact, the ungallant trapper was ungracious enough to refuse the position.

"Wagh!" he said. "This coon ain't, nor never wur, a brand fur thet kind o' a situation."

Knowing the obstinate nature of the old fellow, the position was offered to another, a young man, who readily accepted it.

We passed inside. The sight was enough to tempt one's appetite beyond description.

Upon a rough table, running the whole length of the cabin, were to be seen in thick profusion large and well-cooked haunches of venison, wild turkeys, the roasted ribs of the buffalo, and savory steaks from the bear. Beside these tempting dishes, there was a full complement of vegetables. How these had found their way there, was, to me, a mystery indeed.

I will not attempt to describe further that feast, for I feel that my pen is inadequate to the task.

After far more than satisfying our hunger, we found ourselves once more outside the cabin.

The shooting which Reeves had mentioned to me the night previous, was about to commence. Each was armed with a rifle, and these were carefully examined, in order to ascertain if they were in good condition. Some, and these were the men of acknowledged skill, the hunters and trappers, fired their weapons into the air, and loaded them afresh, knowing

that a rifle carelessly charged is often the cause of a bad shot being made.

Every thing at last being got in readiness, the trials commenced.

The first on the list was the common frontier feat of "driving the nail at sixty rods."

Common as is the feat accomplished, it is nevertheless, an extremely difficult one; and but five out of the number, in the present case, performed it successfully.

The next feat was one which, though requiring less skill than the former, certainly required more nerve. It consisted in this: one of the trappers, standing some fifty rods from a companion upon whose shot he could rely; held between his thumb and forefinger—as it was winter—a small, circular piece of frozen snow. This he held out at arm's length, and the unerring bullet from his companion's rifle pierced it full in the center.

"Bravo!" said Reeves. "A capital shot."

"Wagh!" remarked the trapper who had made the shot, "it takes a great deal o' narve, but that's what we fellers is made of. Thes coon hez, an' by jingo! kin ag'in, drive a bullet plum into a red-skin's eye at eighty rods."

More shots followed, each one demanding more or less skill. Darkness coming on put an end to the contest, and we repaired again to the cabin. The notes of a violin warned us that the dance was about to commence. The cabin had been cleared of all unnecessary furniture, thus leaving the center of the floor vacant for those who wished to take part in the festivities.

I looked round in search of a partner. More than a score of females were present, some young and beautiful—the rest old. These latter, of course, were the wives of the settlers, whose dancing days were long, long ago gone by.

Of the young girls several were beautiful—beautiful beyond description. But one among them all, however, took my fancy; and, receiving an introduction, I soon had her consent to be my next partner for the quadrille.

We had taken our places on the floor, and were waiting for the sets to be completed, when my opposite caused me to center my attentions on him.

To me, his appearance was singular.

He was a man of perhaps thirty years of age, and tall and straight as a young poplar. His complexion, eyes and hair were those of an Indian, but he was dressed in the garb of civilized life. Could he be an Indian? Yes; the retreating chin, narrow forehead, high cheek-bones and copper skin characteristic of the red-man were his. His small and deeply-set eyes were gazing earnestly at some one in the further end of the room. Curiosity caused *me* to look in that direction also. I perceived that the Indian's gaze was fixed upon Reeves, who was seated by the side of a young girl whom, before that moment, I had never seen.

That she was beautiful—beautiful in every sense of the word—is true. Her finely-formed features, and large black eyes, were further set off with thick masses of raven hair which hung down to her waist. She was young—hardly, I guessed, past her eighteenth year. I envied Reeves his good fortune at once, though not so much as did the one opposite me—the Indian. I now could interpret that gaze. *It was jealousy—jealousy fierce and unconcealed.*

Why was this? Why was he, an Indian, jealous of the affections of one who belonged to another race?

Who was he?

I put the question to my partner; in a low tone, of course.

“Oh! Nau-wauna you mean. He is an Ojibwah; but he is educated, sir, I can assure you.”

“Indeed!” I exclaimed.

I felt inclined to carry the conversation further, for the Indian now interested me more than ever. But now the violins gave warning that the quadrille was about to begin.

The Indian was a fine dancer—if not the best on the floor. Sometimes, however, his movements were rendered rather awkward on account of his attentions being centered elsewhere—on the fair being who still sat conversing with my friend, Reeves.

The quadrille ended, and I led my partner to a seat acknowledged my obligations, then left her to herself.

The next was a waltz. I saw my friend and his lovely companion rise from their seats; his arm encircled her waist and they were soon whirling round the room.

Some moments later, the waltz was ended, and my friend had led his partner to a seat, not many feet from where I was seated, and then had left her. This was no sooner done, than the Indian, his glittering orbs now filled with triumph, approached the young girl, and threw himself down in a seat beside her.

"Virginie," he said, in a stern voice, and loud enough for me to hear the words, "why is this?"

"I do not understand you Nau-wauna," said she, pettishly.

"Ugh! Why, I ask, have you slighted me so to-night? Before this, you never as much as seemed to know that I was present."

She made no answer.

"Speak! Virginie Du Bois," he said, in a voice filled with passion.

"This is no place for such conversation," she replied.

"True," he said, in a sarcastic tone. "Well," he continued, rising to his feet, "the next time we converse together, there will be no one, I can assure you, to interfere with us. Farewell!"

He gave her a look—a look fearfully wicked; and then strode hastily toward the door. With a face as pale as death, she rose from her seat and followed him.

Before he had time to reach the door, she neared him, and laid her hand upon his arm. He turned quickly, recognized the young girl, and paused. She whispered something in his ear; then he opened the cabin door, and the two passed outside.

Guided by an uncontrollable impulse, I rose hastily from my seat and followed them. The cabin contained two doors—one at the side—through which the young girl and her companion had just disappeared—and another at the back.

I chose the latter, opened it, and passed quickly outside.

I heard the sound of voices. I listened attentively. They were those of the Indian and his companion. It was she that was speaking.

"I tell you, Nau-wauna, that I do not love Mr. Reeves. He is a friend—nothing more."

"But he loves you?" said Nau-wauna.

"I know it not. Besides, if he did, what is that to you? You, an Indian, have no right to ask me a like question."

She uttered the last sentence without a touch of scorn in them, and they stung the already half-maddened Indian to the quick.

"And so," he said, "you despise me because I am an *Indian*?"

"No, Nau-wauna, I do not despise you. Were you one of my own race, I could never like you better than I do. I value you as I do Mr. Reeves—no more, no less."

"And you never will?" he asked, in a softened tone.

"Never! Nau-wauna. Never!"

She said these words in so positive a voice that the Indian 'knew' that she 'was' sincere.

"Then, Virginie Du Bois, you will never belong to another," he hissed. "This is my reply to your *regard* for me."

I heard the click of a pistol, followed instantly by a slight scream. I sprung forward, whipping my revolver from my belt as I did so. Too late. Before I had time to recover from my surprise—before I had cleared half a dozen paces, a shot rung in my ears, followed, oh, God! with a scream of agony!

CHAPTER IV.

VIRGINIE DU BOIS.

THE shot hastened my movements. I reached the spot but the Indian had already disappeared. Upon the snow, spotted in many a place with crimson, lay the young girl, not the slightest movement giving evidence that she still lived.

By this time those inside the cabin, drawn thither by the report of the shot, had rushed outside. A glance was sufficient to acquaint them with what had happened, and the happiness that had reigned over them a few moments before, now gave way to exclamations of pity from the men, and sobs and cries from the women.

Taking the wounded girl tenderly in my arms, I carried her inside. A table was spread over with shawls and furs, and she was laid upon them.

I felt her pulse. It was throbbing, quick and spasmodically. Life, then, was not extinct.

"Thank Heaven!" I ejaculated. "Perhaps she may live, after all."

I next searched for the spot where the shot had taken effect. I soon found it. It was in the arm, just below its junction with the shoulder.

"Do you think, sir," asked an old man, with long, white hair, "that she will live? She is my daughter."

"Yes," I replied; "with proper care and attention. The villain evidently aimed for a more vital part, but, fortunately, something made him miss his mark."

"Curses on him, say I!" exclaimed the old man. "The vile reptile! Who but myself was it that saved his life when a boy and sent him East to receive an education? and this is the way he repays me. Were I young," he continued, "I would track his steps until I could take his blood, even as he has that of my poor child! Curse him, I say. Curse him!"

"Ay," said a voice from among the lookers-on, "your be-
ing onable to do the thing shan't prevent your hev'n revenge.
By the livin' Geehosephat! sez I, thet air cuss shell be foun'!
Hyur's the child thet kin do it, even if he hez to foller the
sneakin' red-skin to death fur it!"

"Right! hoss," said another voice. "But this hyur ain't
the place fur the likes o' us to stand an' palaver. Let's
move out o' the way o' the weemen. They'll tend to the
gal best."

As soon as these words were spoken, the trappers and hun-
ters, as well as a few of the villagers, stepped forth into the
cold air outside. Giving a few words of advice to the wo-
men who were to see to the wounded girl—who had, by this
time, recovered her senses—and knowing that I could do no-
thing more by way of help, I followed the crowd outside.

I found assembled there a group such as few men meet
with in their lifetime. Determination in its widest sense
was to be seen upon every face there—while emotions of a
far more savage nature were stamped upon the physiogno-
mies of not a few. Deep furrows of subtlety, vindictiveness,
hatred and cruelty were there—the growth of years of war-
fare with the fierce savage of the forest—now awoke from
lethargy into action.

For some moments after they had left the cabin, no one
spoke.

Reeves was the first to break the silence.

"What cause could Nau-wauna have for doing the deed?"

I had supposed up to that moment that I was the only
one who could have answered that question, but in this I
was mistaken.

"Wagh!" said one of the trappers. "This chile war a-
sittin' outside the cabin, an' he heerd the Injin an' the
gal a-palaverin'. He seemed to feel kind o' jealous o' her,
I thort."

"What!" exclaimed another, coupling the word with a
fierce oath, "an' Injin jealous o' a white gal? Must be mis-
taken, cumrade?"

"Possibly," said the first, in a cool tone. "At any rate, it
don't signify, in this child's estimation, what war his *reason*
fur drawin' a bead on the gal, so long as he *did it*. What

we've kum hyur fur iz to see what's to be did on the subject."

"Right, boyee, sez I," said a third speaker, a tall, powerfully built man. "We hain't got no time to lose, ayther."

"Where does Nau-wauna live?"

"Everywhar an' anywhar," was the laconic reply. "Some days you'll find him a-stoppin' at some o' the settlements, an' at another a-livin' among his red-skin frien's. Wagh! Darn yer edikations, sez I! Injins will be Injins, fur all thet."

"Well, then," said one of the villagers, "let one of us be on the look-out at each of the settlements and trading-posts. One can watch at Bangor, another at St. Catherine's, and another at Selkirk."

"Yes," said another voice. "We shall then be sure of him. A very good idea I think."

"Wagh! Cussed greenhorns, sez I!" said a voice which, up to this moment, had not spoken.

I turned around, and recognized the voice as belonging to the trapper who had that morning killed the bear.

"You call us greenhorns, eh, Mark Cook? Come, prove your words," said Reeves, in a tone of pretended anger.

"Wagh!" said the trapper. "Don't ee see thet by the action that varmint hez done this night, thet he's an outlaw?"

"We do. Well, go on, old fellow."

"Wal, do ee think it air likely thet he will stan' the chances o' gettin' a bullet in his karkidge by goin' near any o' the settlements? No siree, it ain't! Thet Injin air smart, he air, by Gechosephat! The catchin' o' him air a-goin' to be no greenhorn's job, so it ain't."

Here the old fellow paused, and stood surveying the crowd as if observing what impression his eloquence had made.

"Well, go on. We know now about as much as we did at the beginning."

"What do you advise us to do, old fellow?"

"In the first place, keep yer eyes peeled."

"Well?"

"An' in the next place to look out fur the red-skins. Rig up the old fort, so thet ve'll hev it ready at a moment's notice to tote into it."

"Do you think, Mark, that we shall have any trouble with the Indians?"

"Can't sw'ar to it," was the trapper's reply. "It's quite likely though, in this child's opeenyun, thet the red-skin will put the Ole Nick into 'em."

It was evident to all, that the trapper's ideas were not to be regarded lightly. Thirty years and over, spent in the forest, had given Mark Cook an insight into Indian character to such an extent that his opinions, among his brother trappers were law the moment they were expressed.

"Yes," continued the trapper, after thinking for a few moments, "the reds 'll not be bac'ards at the work, I reckon. Thes iz a desperut hard winter fur the lazy varmints; an' the corn an' other fodder as is stowed away at the settlements 'll tempt 'em, ef nothing else will."

"Wagh!" said another trapper. "The reds got thur fill when they tried thet game a yeern or two ago. Ef thet Nau-wauna war out o' the road, I guess we needn't be skeered."

"Adzactly, hoss," said Mark Cook. "Thes coon hez made up his mind to raise hes haar, and ye know, the hull o' ye, thet he ain't the man to break his word, he ain't. 'Thurfore," he continued, "the rest o' ye keep watch o'er the settlement. Leave the catchin' o' thet red-skin to me."

The singular old fellow had no sooner uttered these words, than he flung his rifle across his shoulder and stepped toward the forest.

"Whar now?" inquired a voice. "Ye ain't goin' to start on hes trail to-night?"

"This very night. Thes coon waits fur nobody."

At that instant an impulse seized me like lightning; and, ere I had time to think the desire over, I found myself at the trapper's side.

"My name is Montgomery," I said, introducing myself. "I am a friend of Mr. Reeves."

Here I stopped, hardly knowing how to proceed next.

"Wal, young feller," he said, "go on. What do ee want?"

"To go with you. I feel interested in that young lady who was wounded to-night, and it will give me the greatest pleasure to see the villain who did the deed in your hands."

"Pish! Geehoscpbat! Young feller, do ee think thet

arter I refused the kumpany o' sich fellers as Jim Rice, Tom Huggins, an' one or two more, thet I'd cotton to a greenhorn like you? Pish!"

This was any thing but flattering, certainly. However, I thought that I knew the ill-natured trapper's foible; and a trial proved that I had not been mistaken.

I pulled from my inside pocket a small flask of Cognac, which I had procured in St. Louis, and handed it to the trapper.

"Drink," I said. "The night is very cold."

A grim smile became visible upon the old fellow's face as he perceived the flask. He took it, raised the flask to his mouth, and swallowed a huge draught.

"Wagh!" he said, as he handed me back the bottle; "thet air ain't the stuff they peddle roun' hyur, I reckon. Well," he continued, "you're a civil sort o' a greenhorn, so come along, ef you likes."

"Thank you," I said. "But my rifle. I left it in the cabin."

I reached the cabin, seized my rifle from a corner in which it had been placed, and was soon again at the trapper's side, who, during this, had patiently stood waiting for me.

"Is yer weepun loaded, young feller?"

I replied in the affirmative.

"Then come on."

CHAPTER V.

ON THE TRACK.

It was, as yet, but early The full moon was still sweeping up toward the zenith.

We continued on the trail of the Indian for nearly a mile, then the trapper turned sharply to the left, and entered a spot covered with a thick growth of bushes.

"Young feller," said my companion, as we with difficulty made our way through the bushes, "I suppose ye thort we war to toller thet Injin by his tracks?"

"Yes, Mark."

"He! he! he! No, sir-e-e. Thet Injin knows thet he'll be follered, an' this chud w'u'dn't give a three-cent plug o' terbaccy fur his top-knot as duz foller him."

Slow as our progress was through the barrier of bushes, we at last arrived at a spot of clear ground. It was evidently a marsh, for the ground beneath the snow was exceedingly rough—as if in small hillocks—and not a tree or bush could we see for a long distance before us.

"Is this a marsh we are crossing, Mark?"

"Yes. Thar's the river ahead o' us."

It was the far-famed Red River of the North.

We reached its banks, descended a few feet, and then we were walking over its frozen surface.

Instead of crossing directly over, the trapper faced down the river's course, and continued on in that direction for at least four or five miles. Here his course was again changed. He now headed directly for the right shore.

Before reaching the bank, I saw that high and rugged cliffs overhung the river at that point for at least two rods; thus presenting a seemingly impassable barrier to any one approaching from the river.

Beneath the overhanging cliffs, the ice was smooth as glass. Not an inch of snow covered it, thus rendering our progress slow and tiresome.

After continuing up the stream for some distance, the cliffs suddenly dwindled down to small risings of ground. Here we left the river, and soon after struck once more into the forest.

Cold as was the night-air, the exercise kept us warm, and our spirits high.

"Lookee yonder!" said the trapper, suddenly coming to a halt, and pointing toward the western sky.

Looking in the direction indicated, I perceived in an instant what he meant. The sky was lit up by an intense red glare, as if some conflagration were sweeping through the forest.

"What is it, Mark?"

"Injins. Thar's a big Ojibway village thar, an' thet's whar this coon expects to find the varmint we air arter."

"But, that fire? Is it their usual custom to have so large a one every night?"

"No. Thar's something in the wind; thet's clur!"

We pressed on—rapidly, but not a whit less cautiously.

Mile after mile was passed. The moon was now drawing near the horizon. A flash of light between the trees before us revealed the fact that the Indian village mentioned by the trapper was before us.

We now came to a halt.

"Now," said the trapper, "young feller, you stop hyur. This child 'll step for'ards an' rekonoyter."

Following the trapper's directions, I took my stand near an immense pine, resolving to stand there until the old fellow's return. Something unusual must have been transpiring at the Indian village, for I could hear shouts and yells echoing through the woods until they sounded like Pandemonium.

The trapper was not long absent. However, he had learned in the time enough to satisfy himself how next to proceed.

"Well," he said, "thus fur we've been safe. Now it comes to the dangerous part o' the game."

I did not answer, and he continued:

"Now's the time to show yer pluck. We're a-goin' into the village."

"I'm ready, Mark, I assure you."

"Good! The Injins appear friendly enough. They've just returned from a hunt, an' air hevin' a jubilee o'er it. Come ahead, young feller."

We shouldered our rifles, and boldly approached the clearing. In the center of this stood the Ojibway village.

The wigwams, numbering some two hundred, were arranged in a complete circle. In the center of the circle was blazing the huge fire that had first attracted our attention.

Standing at some distance apart from this was a pole, some ten feet in height, and thrown over this was the shaggy hide of a buffalo. Around these were gathered a crowd of squaws, men and boys, leaping, shouting and wildly gesticulating. It was an Indian dance—a dance in honor of Wau-be-ana-ka, the god of hunting.

Our approach was soon perceived, and we became the center of a group of warriors, curious to learn what had brought us thither.

"We air cold," said the trapper. "We want to stay with our Indian friends all night."

"Where do the pale-faces come from? From there?" The savage raised his hand and pointed toward the south—in the direction of the settlements.

"Wagh! no," replied the cunning trapper. "We kum from thar."

The old lynx pointed toward the north.

This satisfied the warriors apparently; and we were immediately granted permission to remain in the village over night. One of the savages, who seemed to know Mark, led us to his wigwam, entered and bade us follow. We did so; and, a moment after, the warrior took his departure, leaving us to ourselves.

"Geehosephat!" remarked the trapper. "This air a queer place for this coon—right in the midst o' a hull village o' reds. Wagh! did ye notice, young feller, how them reds stared at me?"

"Yes," I replied, more for the sake of tickling the old fellow's vanity than any thing else; "it is evident that they regard you with as much reverence as the French did Bonaparte."

Though perhaps the trapper knew as much about Bonaparte as did the savages outside, he felt none the less pleased at the comparison.

Love of approbation was one of the old fellow's most prominent traits.

"Wagh!" he said, after a few moments' silence. "This ain't adzackly to my liking—sittin' like a hedge-hog in a red-skin's tent. They outside air enjoyin' themselves, an' by Gee-hosephat! this coon is a-goin' to jine 'em."

The trapper seized his ever-constant companion—his rifle—rose to his feet, and passed to the outside.

I had no desire then to follow him. Feeling tired, I lay down upon a few robes near a fire in the center of the wigwam, and gave way to my reflections.

Here I was in a strange situation—my own seeking. What had prompted it? Revenge! Nothing else? Yes. It was—

Reader, you can answer the question as well as I. You, I doubt not, have felt the emotions that I did, when you in your young days for the first time looked upon the most beautiful girl that ever came across your path. Such was Virginie Du Bois to me. I had seen many fair—ay, beautiful—faces before, but none so fair as hers! Hers was a face fit for Venus herself.

While thinking thus, Morpheus seized me, with his irresistible power; and I was soon in the land of dreams.

How long I slept, I know not. At all events it could not have been much over an hour. I was awoke by shouts and yells that well befitted those that uttered them.

I looked round in search of the trapper.

The light of the fire was sufficient to show me that he was not there.

I seized my rifle, which was lying beside me, and hurriedly rushed from the wigwam outside. The huge fire that had been kindled had been replenished with wood, and was consequently still burning fierce as ever. Around it was gathered a crowd of warriors, yelling, dancing and sometimes quarreling.

The squaws had evidently retired to their lodges, as not one of them was now to be seen. I was not long in

discovering the trapper. He was among a number of savages, like them, acting like a madman.

In an instant I thought I divined all. *The trapper was drunk.*

My first impulse was to fly from the spot on the instant, but a second thought restrained me. It was my duty, if possible, to get the trapper away as soon as possible. I felt certain that if we lingered there, our lives would not be worth a straw. The savages, frenzied with whisky and other like vile compounds of the Indian trader, would not scruple to butcher us on the spot, should the idea cross them.

Approaching the trapper, I succeeded with some difficulty in drawing him to one side.

"Mark," I said, "come with me. I wish to speak to you."

"Kum, young feller," he said, in a low, steady voice, "this hyur ain't the place fur you. Go back to the wigwam. Thes coon 'll be thar in a squ'l's jump."

"Certain?"

"Sartin. Hurry."

I had hardly regained the inside of the lodge, when, true to his promise, I was joined by the trapper.

"He! he! he!" chuckled the old fox. "Ee thort this coon war drunk, young feller, eh? No, sir-ee; Mark Cook iz fond o' a drop or so now an' then, but not in a place like this. Young feller, I p'arnt something by actin' as I did. He! he! he! The fire-water as they call it onloosened thar tongues too soon."

"What did you hear, Mark?" I asked.

"We can't stay here, fur one thing."

"Is that all?"

"No. Them red-skins is red-hot fur skalps. Young feller, we're to hev another red-skin war!"

CHAPTER VI.

A FORCED PROMISE.

WE ceased our conversation, and stood for a second listening. The noise outside was still as loud as ever.

"Not that way," said the trapper, as I stepped toward the slit which served the lodge for a door. "We mustn't let the reds squint us, an' they will ef ye go that way. Lookee hyur!"

The man pulled forth a sharp hunting-knife from his belt, stuck its point in the skins which formed the rear of the lodge, and with its keen edge ripped a slit large enough to admit the passage of our bodies.

We had no sooner passed outside, than we found ourselves in close proximity to the edge of the clearing. A few steps were sufficient for us to reach the forest; and, without once looking back, hastened as fast away from the village as possible.

Before sunrise, and after a long and weary walk, we reached Reeves' cabin. The dog, having given warning of our approach, we found the hospitable owner of the cabin ready to admit us at once.

"Ha!" said he, as we seated ourselves by the warm fire, "you are soon back. What success?"

"More'n I expected," answered the trapper. "I've l'arned one thing thet'll be the means o' savin' more'n one life, I reckon."

"What is that?" inquired Reeves.

"Another risin'."

"Heavens! Mark. When—or didn't you learn that much—is the bloody work to begin?"

"I didn't hear. But, in coorse, it won't be afore spring. Red-skins can't fight worth a mush-rat plew in winter."

"True. But, who, think you, is the cause of the rising? Not that devil, Nau-wauna?"

"Partly him," replied the trapper, "an' partly that cwt throat, Flying-squirrel. Wagh! The two air as thick as muskeeters in August!"

"Curse them!" exclaimed Reeves. "If they were both out of the way, we could probably come to terms with the warriors. I know Flying-squirrel well—one of the most brutal of savages, a fiend incarnate!"

"This child hes hed hes eye on the varmint fur some time. But he don't squat aroun' hyur. He roosts with hes tribe about a hundred mile or so north-west o' hyur."

"Could the spot be reached before spring?"

"Sartin it could."

"Very well. If so, then, let the chief be struck down before he can push affairs toward a commencing point. And, in the meanwhile, let the villagers keep on the look-out. Curse the savages, say I! Look at my poor dog there. Some sneaking red-skin did that!"

"Wal," said the trapper, "in this coon's opeenyun it w'u'd only be a fool's errand to go north to look arter Flying-squirrel. Depend on it, the chief 'll be aroun' hyur, as soon as he l'arns thet Nau-wauna an' hes white frien's hev hed a rumpus. But kum! Thes coon feels sort o' sleepy, he duz."

After a few more words, only of minor importance, we rolled in our blankets and slept.

When I awoke it was nearly noon. The trapper had only aroused himself a few minutes before me, and I discovered him seated by the fire-place.

Soon after we partook of a hearty repast; and, along with Mark, I set out for St. Catherine, the nearest settlement; which we reached after a walk of about three miles.

We proceeded at once to the village fort, a somewhat spacious structure, and upon which a score of settlers were busily at work. During the last Indian outbreak the fort had been tested severely, and it would take some little work to repair it again. Several huge trees had been felled, hauled by the aid of oxen close to the stockade, and were being split into lengths.

It was not long before I recognized M. Du Bois, the father of Virginie. He was standing on the parapet of the fort, giving some orders to a number at work there.

"Your daughter," I asked. "Is she better?"

"Very much, sir. Her wound pains her exceedingly, but, otherwise, she feels as well as ever. But come, you are a physician, I have heard. Would you like to see her?"

"Providing she has no objections, yes."

"Objections! Bah! It is for her own good."

We left the parapet, descended to the ground, and I followed the old man until we arrived at his cabin—the largest and neatest looking in the settlement.

The old man opened the door, and I followed him inside. He led me along a short passage-way, opened another door, and bade me enter. I did so.

The beautiful girl was before me. She was paler than last night, but not a whit the less beautiful.

"Virginie, this is Doctor Montgomery. He has called, at my request, to see you."

"Sir," said she, turning her glance toward me, "I think I have seen you before—last night. I was half-asleep, half-awake, lying upon a table. Many faces bent over me—but one kinder than all the rest. It was you. I remember it well, now."

It is impossible for me to describe the transports I felt upon hearing those words. I could have jumped for joy. I could not speak.

"Yes, Virginie," answered the old man for me. "The doctor found you after you were hurt, and carried you inside."

The white shoulder was bared, and I at once proceeded to examine the ugly wound. It was very much inflamed, and consequently very painful; but the lovely girl bore the pain like a hero. I applied a fresh dressing to the wound, prescribed some simple tonics, and then we changed the subject for other topics.

It is needless to say that I passed the afternoon there. It was the happiest afternoon I had ever spent in my whole existence.

When at last I bade my entertainers good-night, and took my departure, it was dark. The moon had not yet risen; and, even if it had, the dark clouds that overhung would have prevented her light from being seen.

I knew that I should find the trapper at the fort, his usual rendezvous when at the village. So I hastened thither.

I had scarcely proceeded half a dozen rods, before a figure loomed up suddenly in the path before me.

"Some villager," I thought.

I kept on. Suddenly the figure, with the quickness of lightning, turned and seized my arms, rendering them powerless to act. I was held as in a vice.

"Your pardon," said the voice of him who had taken me prisoner thus, "but I wish to question you. Your name is Montgomery, and you are a doctor?"

"I make some pretense in that direction," I answered.

"You have seen Virginie Du Bois?"

Ha! I knew the voice now. Heavens! It was the Indian, Nau-wauna! Taken by surprise as I was, I was fortunately master enough over myself to answer him without betraying my surprise. I answered his question in the affirmative.

"Is she better?"

"Yes."

"Will she recover?"

"Yes, with proper attention."

"The great Manitou who rules over us be praised!"

"Doctor Montgomery," he continued, still retaining his hold upon me, "do all you can for her, bring her back to health, and you shall be rewarded."

"Oh!" said I, warmly. "I can promise you to do all I can, by all means."

"Thank you. There is something else that I wish you to promise me. As you value your life, do not mention there"—pointing to the cabin I had just left—"what has occurred between you and I to-night. They need fear me no more. What I did last night was because my blood was hot."

"Before I can promise," said I, "you must swear that you will seek to do Virginie Du Bois no more harm."

"I swear it," said he.

"Then I promise."

He uttered a slight ejaculation, released one of my hands, and pulled forth a small string of wampum. The next instant he flung this over my neck.

"Take this," he said. "Wear it, and whenever you are among the Ojibways you will be safe."

He released my other hand, and, before I could reply, he was gone.

Though Nau-wauna was an enemy, his gift was not to be slighted. I pulled it from my neck and placed it in my breast-pocket, resolving to keep it there, until a time came, when I could use it to advantage.

Then I walked hastily in the direction of the fort.

On arriving there I found the trapper in the company of two or three of his companions. After drawing him to one side, I said :

"Mark, I have seen Nau-wauna."

"Whar?"

"Promise to keep silent on the point."

The trapper promised.

"In the village."

I then narrated to the old fellow every thing that had been said between us, including the promise made to the Indian that I would not reveal what I knew to Virginie Du Bois or her father.

"Mark," I continued, "I have just thought of something. Do you know why Nau-wauna shot Virginie Du Bois?"

"No, young feller."

"It was because he was jealous of Reeves. The villain sought to murder her, why, then, will he not try to do the same to Reeves?"

"Wagh! young feller. Ye ain't the greenhorn I took ye for at first, arter all. Yer words air surer'n shootin'."

"We had better give Reeves warning, then?"

"Sartin. It w'u'dn't be surprisin' to thes coon ef the varmint hed two or three frien's wi' him, an' they wur to commence thur game thes very night."

We bade good-night to those in the fort, and immediately set out upon our errand.

The three miles seemed a mere nothing, and we were soon close to Reeves' cabin.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNEQUAL COMBAT.

OUTLINED against the cabin was the figure of a human being. Who was it—Reeves himself?

Before I had time to decide, my companion clutched my arm, causing me to come to a halt instantly.

“Hold on! Injins, by the Eternal!”

“Are you sure, Mark?”

“Wagh! It’s clur as shootin’. Let’s step a leetle mite ahead, but be very keerful.”

We advanced forward a few yards, in order to be the better able to observe what was transpiring. The figure I had supposed was that of my friend, was not now to be mistaken. Although it was rather dark, I could make out the savage’s blanket and head-dress, and, above all, that stealthy walk, when he moved, which is natural to all his race.

We observed his movements closely.

At first he stood in a listening attitude, then, hearing nothing to alarm him, he advanced a few feet, and came to a halt again. This was repeated several times; until at last he stood close to the cabin window. He gave a hurried glance inside, then skulked rapidly away.

“Nau-wauna is on the track,” said my companion in a whisper, after the savage had disappeared. “Thet war hes spy. Thur’s no time to be lost. The rest o’ ’em ’ll be hyur in a squ’ll’s jump. Young feller, run like blazes to the cabin. Thes coon ’ll keep watch o’er ye. Get Reeves out by the back way—make fur the woods, an’ thes coon ’ll j’ine ye. Quick!”

With a quick rush, I gained the cabin, and tried to open the door.

It was fastened.

“Reeves!” I cried. “Open the door, quick!”

“Ha! Montgomery!” said my friend, opening the door

“Back again, eh?”

"Yes," I answered. "Come, we have no time to lose. That fiend, Nau-wauna, is after you. Hurry ! or we shall be lost."

"Nau-wauna after me ? Why ?"

"I can't explain that now. For God's sake, come !"

Hardly comprehending the danger he was in, Reeves seized his rifle, and followed me. I led the way out of the back door. A few seconds sufficed for us to gain the cover of the forest.

"Are you alone ?" asked Reeves.

"No, Mark Cook came—he is here."

We were at that moment joined by the trapper.

"Loaded ?" he asked in a whisper, pointing to our rifles.

We both answered in the affirmative.

For upward of twenty minutes we stood there, straining our ears to catch the slightest sound. At last the silence was broken by the cry of a wolf. This caused a thought to suddenly present itself.

"Reeves, you have forgotten your dog."

"By the Almighty ! it's too true," responded my friend. "I must go after him. I value the animal too much to not try to save him."

He placed his rifle in my hands, and hurriedly darted away in the direction of the cabin. This reached, we saw him open the door, and disappear inside.

Again the cry of a wolf echoed through the woods. Was it a signal ?

Some moments elapsed. To our anxiety, Reeves was yet within the cabin. What on earth could be keeping him ?

A moment or two more passed. Again we heard the cry of the wolf, now much nearer than before.

At that instant—before the echo had time to die away—three savages appeared on the clearing before the cabin.

To our relief, Reeves an instant later emerged from the back-door of the cabin, carrying something in his arms, and he succeeded in gaining the forest without being perceived by the savages in the opening.

"Wagh !" ejaculated the trapper. "Thes child purposes to change quarters at one't. Some o' the imps may 'a' squinted him 'ithout us a-knowing it."

Accordingly, keeping well beneath the cover of the woods, we advanced a few paces to the left, and came to a halt among a clump of leafless bushes, where we could still command a view of the cabin.

During this the savages in the clearing had been reinforced. We could now see at least a dozen—each having emerged from a different point.

With eyes filled with hatred, and with rifle cocked and ready, we sat awaiting what would next transpire. The devils evidently supposed they were guarding their intended prey. Ha! little did they suppose he was watching *them*.

Their first movement was to surround the cabin. This being executed, with horrid yells they closed in, one or two rushing inside the cabin.

Before long, we heard exclamations, loud and fierce, and those who had entered the cabin rushed forth.

"Wagh!" said the trapper. "They've foun' thet thur bird is flown."

We could hear the savages giving vent to words fierce and vengeful. I thought that I could recognize the voice of Nau-wauna among them.

Soon a couple of Indians wandered off to the forest. These returned, bringing with them large armfuls of dry brush-wood. Their intention was at once apparent.

"Wagh!" said the trapper. "It's thur intention to sot fire to the cabin, by Geehosephat!"

"Curse them," exclaimed Reeves. "I certainly didn't build that cabin for the purpose of having it burned. What think you, Mark? Can not we whip 'em?"

"We kin try, at all events. Thur's a log thur, an' byur's three o' us lyur."

The trapper pointed toward a log that lay only a few feet away.

"Onc't Jim Ferry an' thes coon wiped out more red-skins than ye kin squint yander, ahint a log like thes."

"Let us be quick, then," said Reeves. "Taey'll have the fire started in a minute."

We took our positions behind the log, lying flat upon our stomachs. At first, some bushes that intervened between us and the Indians, prevented us from seeing them. But a few

strokes of a hatchet, and this was remedied. The savages were now in full view.

"Now then," said the trapper, "pick out yer men, 'ith the exception o' that varmint as iz just a settin' down hes wood. Leave him to thes coon."

It took us but a second to single out our men, and then to level our rifles. I took care to aim with the utmost care, as the dim light that surrounded our marks was very deceiving.

Each of us fired at a signal from the trapper, the reports of our rifles being almost simultaneous.

Two of the savages fell without a groan. Reeves missed his aim. My two companions immediately commenced to reload their rifles. But as I carried in my belt a weapon possessed by neither of them—the matchless Colt revolver—I whipped that out, and fired three shots in rapid succession.

This served to dislodge the savages from their position. In less time than it takes to write it, not one was to be seen, in the clearing. The shots I had fired from my Colt had proved effectual each time. Five out of the thirteen of our foes now lay upon the ground.

The remainder of our foes were not long inactive. Though forced to retreat, they were not so easily conquered. We were not surprised, then, when we saw them suddenly appear again in the opening, not spread out as before, but in a body, and leaping over the frozen ground like frightened deer.

For the first second or two the savages ran directly toward our position, but, quick as thought, they wheeled to their right, and made for the cabin. Its door was swung open, and, quicker than thought, they were inside.

So sudden had been their movements, that we had not time to fire a shot.

"That is a singular move," said Reeves. "Perhaps they intend to fire the cabin from the inside."

"It's thes coon's opeenyn," said the trapper, "that the reds don't know whar the shots kum frum. They think we air hid somewhar on the inside."

We lay upon the cold snow for some time. The savages

were still within the cabin. The night was exceedingly cold, and I felt numb with lying in the position we had been maintaining. I felt that I could bear it no longer.

"I don't know how you feel," said I to my companions, "but as for me, I had rather attack the savages than wait for them to attack us again."

The proposition was agreed to at once. We certainly had nothing to gain by staying where we were.

"Thet cabin ain't very high, I reckon?" asked Mark, addressing Reeves.

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Wagh! Fur reasons o' my own. Follow me, both ye. By the 'tarnal earthquake! don't make as much noise as a cat w'u'd."

"All right, Mark. Lead on."

We rose to our feet, feeling any thing but nimble. This was especially so with the trapper, whose rheumatic joints had been any thing but soothed by lying so long on the cold snow. But, unmindful of the pain, he led us on until we had arrived directly at the rear of the cabin. There was no window in that part, and, as the door was closed, we could approach without fear of being detected, as long as the savages kept themselves within.

With the utmost caution, we pressed forward. We stood not four feet from the cabin, waiting for the trapper to decide what should be our next move. Suddenly the cabin door was seen to open, and a savage thrust forth his head. He must have seen us, for we were directly before him. But, if he did, before the signal had time to rise to his lips, Reeves sprung forward with lightning like rapidity, and clutched the painted savage by the throat. Being a man of more than ordinary physical strength, he jerked the Indian outside, and bore him to the earth. Raising his powerful fist, he brought it down with all his power upon the Ojibwah's temple. Still retaining his grip upon the savage's throat, he held him thus until life was extinct. Then releasing his clutch, he threw him upon the snow.

So quietly had this been done, that the savages within were still unconscious of our close proximity.

The savage was no sooner disposed of in the manner re-

lated, than, beckoning us to follow him, the trapper placed his hands upon the low roof of the cabin, and, after some little difficulty, succeeded in gaining the roof with the rest of his body. We soon followed him, I wondering to myself what could be the old fellow's motive for bringing us thither.

However, it was not long before his motive was explained.

"He! he!" he chuckled, in a low tone. "Thes hyur 'll be one o' the best things thes coon iver did, in the way o' Injun-fi'tin. Now then—" addressing this to Reeves, "yo jerk out yer hatchet an' the fust Injin as shows hes top-knot outside, split hes skull! I'll take thes door."

The trapper's intention was evident, now. Mark and Reeves, with their hatchets, could strike down the savages as they came forth, and if any succeeded in escaping the blows, I was to endeavor to finish them with my revolver.

The trapper and Reeves had already taken their positions—one upon the roof directly over each door of the cabin.

"Young fellow," said the trapper to me, "let us hev a suck out o' thet flask o' yours. It'll kind o' brace my narves."

I drew forth the flask, and handed it to him. He swallowed a huge gulp; then handed it back. Reeves, too, indulged in a swallow, then the flask returned to its place.

"Now then, young feller," said the trapper, "jest toss a handful o' powder down thet chimney, will ye. Thet'll kind o' scare 'em out, I reckon."

I drew from my powder-flash a somewhat large quantity of its contents. Then, seizing enough snow to make it into a paste, I rolled it into a round ball. This was done in order to keep the powder together. The hot fire would soon dry it, and then the explosion would be more terrific.

I approached the chimney, and dropped the ball. In less than six seconds, the explosion came.

With a wild yell of terror the savages, who had up to this moment thought us secreted within the cabin, rushed forth, some from the front door, the rest from that in the rear.

With their hatchets, the trapper and Reeves succeeded in striking down five out of the seven. The other two escaped, owing to the suddenness with which the rush had been made. Two shots were fired at them, but their time had not yet come.

They disappeared in the forest. We descended at once to the inside of the cabin. We knew that, for that night at least, we would have nothing more to fear from our enemies.

In the morning, we examined the dead bodies of our foes. Among them I had some hopes of finding Nau-wauna. But in this I was disappointed. Fortune favored him, and he had escaped.

CHAPTER VIII.

NAU-WAUNA'S RETURN.

THREE months and some days have passed since the events narrated in the last chapter. It was nearly the first of April.

Spring with its genial sun and warm showers had come, melting the snow from hill and forest, and swelling the rivers and streams to overflowing.

The voice of the duck gliding over the smooth water of the lakes was to be heard, and the wild goose in countless numbers winging their way north—to the region of eternal snow!

Long before this, Virginie Du Bois had entirely recovered. I saw her often—nearly every day. One night I learned from her own lips that the deep affection I bore for her was reciprocated. Need I say that I was happy?

Afterward, we spoke of marriage. She had all her life longed to see the far-famed wonderful East, and when I spoke of taking her there, she received the proposal with pleasure. Her father, too, she told me, was tired of the life of a pioneer, and would accompany us.

Accordingly, the very day after—after obtaining the consent of M. Du Bois—I commenced making preparations for our journey.

I had determined upon proceeding up the river in canoes for a long distance, then striking across the prairie until we arrived at some town along the course of the Mississippi. Thence by steamboat to St. Louis.

As I had good reasons for supposing that the Ojibwahs in that section would be any thing but friendly, I determined upon engaging the services of several hunters and trappers. This, I knew, could be accomplished without any difficulty whatever, as the trappers made the journey to St. Paul every spring, for the purpose of disposing of their furs. St. Paul, at that time, was the principal mart for the north-western trap-

pers, the traders there paying a higher price for peltries than their brethren who had stations along the Red River.

I learned from Mark that he intended to start, himself, in a few days, and he would be one of our number.

In less than two days I had every thing arranged for our journey. Blankets, canoe, jerked-meat were in readiness to be used when the time should come.

The settlement at this period presented a lively aspect. Every day, trappers and hunters were arriving with the proceeds of their winter's labor, awaiting a favorable opportunity to transport them down the river.

It was evening. The sun was just below the horizon. I had wandered down to the river, in the hopes of seeing what I expected would arrive that night—a company of trappers from New Harlem, a settlement some miles down the river.

Before I had been long on the spot, I happened to direct my gaze up the river. There, far as the eye could see by the light at that hour, I thought I could detect a canoe. It appeared to be close to the opposite bank, and to be coming down the stream. I know not why, but Nau-wauna suddenly crossed my mind. Since the night on which he had made his unsuccessful attack at Reeves' cabin, nothing of the Indian had been seen. Report said that he had gone north, in order to endeavor, with the aid of their head chief, Flying-squirrel, to raise hostilities between the Ojibwahs and the whites.

I cast a second glance toward the object that had attracted my attention, and being still unable to determine whether or not the occupant of the canoe was an Indian, ran toward the fort for my spy-glass. This being secured, I hastened back to the river.

Adjusting the glass to the right focus, I raised it to my eyes, and swept the river.

To my surprise, not a sign of either the canoe or its occupant were to be seen.

I lowered the glass, and looked with my naked eye. The result was as before. The canoe had evidently been run in, and its occupant landed.

Was this to be looked upon as something suspicious or not? If he whom I had seen was a trapper, or settler, no. If an

Indian—yes. I felt certain that it was the latter. Nay, more. I could have sworn that it was Nau-wauna.

I proceeded at once in search of the trapper, Mark Cook. To my disappointment he was not to be found. Happening, however, to meet with Bill Raven, a tall, powerfully-built man, who had the reputation of being the crack bear-hunter of the North-west, I laid what I had seen before him.

With me, he had no doubt that the occupant of the canoe I had seen was Nau-wauna.

“Wagh!” said he. “We’ll arter him at once. Five hundred dollars air worth the trouble.”

In order that the reader may perfectly understand what the hunter meant by the latter part of his sentence, I will add that the very day after his daughter came so near ending her life by the hand of a would-be assassin, M. Du Bois offered a reward of five hundred dollars for the Indian, “dead or alive.”

Our preparations were soon made. We launched the canoe we had secured, took our places in it, and a stroke of the paddle sent us out into the stream.

By this time it was quite dark.

We headed our canoe for the opposite bank, and, when this was neared, we kept well in under the bank, and headed the light craft up-stream.

“How far war it up, doctor?” asked my companion.

“Some distance,” I replied. “You know where the creek empties into the river?”

“Yes.”

“Well, when I saw the canoe it was about ten rods, as near as I can judge, beyond that.”

“I shedn’t wonder ef the Injin disappeared in the crik.”

We made cautious, yet rapid headway. We could tell by the sound of the water that we had arrived near the creek, a small stream of water having its source in a marshy piece of land a few miles from the Red River. At its junction with the river it was exceedingly shallow, and it could be heard plainly as it rolled along over the stones and pebbles.

We arrived opposite this, passed it, then ran the canoe close in shore, and landed.

Some distance up, the creek was almost choked up with

an immense growth of rushes. These we examined, and found that none were broken, or appeared to have been lately disturbed.

"Wagh!" said the hunter. "The Injin didn't pass through the creek, at any rate. It war above hyur you saw the canoe."

"To the best of my knowledge, it was."

"The feller might 'a' crossed o'er to the other side, while you war arter the glass."

"I think not," I answered. "In the first place, he would not have had the time; and, secondly, he must have known that he would have risked a greater chance of being seen, did he attempt to cross the river."

"Wal, then," said the hunter, "we'll look around further up the stream."

We again embarked, and, keeping close to the bank, paddled up the stream.

"Look thur," suddenly exclaimed Raven, before we had proceeded far. "'Thur's the canoe, by jingo!"

He raised his paddle, and with it directed my gaze toward a small clump of willows. There, half-concealed, half-drawn up on the bank, was a canoe, sure enough.

"I thought I was not mistaken," said I to my companion, in a low voice. "The Indian must have shot in directly after I went after my glass."

My companion, leaning slightly forward, endeavored to penetrate with his eye the darkness beyond.

"I don't think the savage is thur," he said, after a short time. "At any rate, we'll go in."

A sweep of the paddle headed our light craft inward, and another sent us in close to the bank.

As I had occupied the bow, I was the first to jump ashore. Raven quickly followed me, and the canoe was then drawn up on the bank high enough to be out of the reach of the water.

After satisfying ourselves that no one was watching our movements, we turned our attention toward the strange canoe. Examining it as closely as possible by the dim light by which we were surrounded, the conclusion arrived at by Raven was this:

"I kin sw'ar that canoe belongs to Nau-wauna," ne said. "I've seen it at the settlement more nor once."

The hunter had scarcely said the words, when my attention was attracted by a small white object lying on the canoe bottom.

I bent down, and grasped it eagerly. It was a piece of paper, neatly folded, and written over on the inside, with bold characters; but, of course, by the dim light I was unable to decipher it.

Feeling satisfied that the piece of paper, which the owner of the canoe had accidentally dropped, would eventually prove useful, I placed it carefully in my pocket.

It was decided by us that we should remain in the neighborhood of the canoe until its owner returned—at least, if he should do so before morning. Accordingly we concealed ourselves where we could command a good view of the canoe, and, with rifles cocked, awaited the return of Nau-wauna with undiminished hope that the fiend would soon be in our power.

Hours passed. Morning dawned, but the Indian came not. We waited until the sun had appeared above the horizon, then determined to return at once to the village.

But before doing so, I pulled forth the note I had found in the canoe; and, with emotions indescribable, read as follows:

"ST. CATHERINE, March 10th, 18—

"NAU-WAUNA:

"Virginie Du Bois is doing well. Doctor Montgomery, who is attending her, is, I should judge from what I have seen and heard, a particular friend of hers. In fact, Reeves is nowhere, in comparison. I intend going away for a few days, but will return so as to be able to meet you near the old pine tree on the 4th day of April, about 8 P. M., where we can arrange affairs without difficulty.

GEORGE GARNET."

George Garnet! I knew him well.

He was a nephew of M. Du Bois, and one of the most heartless of fiends I had ever met. Upon one occasion, I had learned from Virginie Du Bois, he had plotted against his uncle, obtained a large sum of money, and disappeared. The villain went to St. Paul, committed another crime, and, but for the uncle, whom he had so ungenerously robbed,

would have suffered the privations of a prison life. But for a large sum of money, M. Du Bois secured his nephew's release, and made him return with him to St. Catherine.

For a time it seemed that the young man—he was but twenty-two—was truly penitent, but, after awhile, he resumed his old course of wickedness.

It was a well-known fact through the village that George Garnet and Nau-wauna were on the best of terms; but, after the Indian's attempt upon his cousin's life, it was supposed that the friendship hitherto sustained between the two was a thing of the past.

As the note shows, this was a mistake.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRADER.

By the time we reached the village, the sun was high in the heavens.

The settlement, to our surprise, was all excitement. A trapper had arrived that morning and reported that the Ojibwabs had attacked the settlement of New Harlem the last night, and that the inhabitants had been massacred to a man.

This was enough for the terrified villagers of St. Catherine. With one accord the household effects were hurried into the fort, for at any instant the savages might appear upon the scene.

This news of course at once put our intended journey out of the question—at least, until the savages along the border should once more be in a state of peace. I chafed at the delay ; but, of course, it was quite unavoidable.

The trappers who were at the settlement when the news of the outbreak arrived, at once packed the furs in the fort cellar, resolving, as was the usual custom of those daring men, to stay near the settlement until peace once more reigned. Among these were Raven, and the trapper, Mark Cook. Both had been unusually fortunate that winter, and spring found them in possession of enough furs of various descriptions to bring them hundreds and hundreds of dollars, should they succeed in transporting them safely to St. Paul.

During the course of the afternoon, the settlers were surprised by the arrival, from up the river, of a large, flat-bottomed scow. The scow contained six men—whites.

It was towed up the river until nearly opposite the fort, then run ashore.

It had no sooner touched, than two of the men sprung ashore, and proceeded at once toward the fort. Anxious to learn what their business might be, I started toward them, accompanied by half a dozen hunters and trappers. As we neared each other, I was not long in recognizing one of the men who had landed from the scow.

It was George Garnet.

A few more yards passed over, and we met.

With the exception of myself, Garnet was well known to all; and as we met, he stopped and greeted each man in turn.

"This," said he, introducing his companion, after the greetings were over, "is M. Rabelle, a friend of mine, a trader.

"A trader!" "Waugh!" "Geebosephat!" were the exclamations that went the round of the trappers, on hearing this piece of information.

"Yes," answered Garnet, "a trader. He proposes to buy all your skins, and pay you a fair price."

"Haven't ye heerd the news, Mister Garnet?" asked Raven, who was one of the number.

"Yes," answered the other. "The Indians, you mean?"

"Yes."

"That is what brought us here. We knew that, as trouble has arisen between the Indians and settlers, you would not be likely to carry your furs to the market, and the war may last all summer."

"Wal," said one of the trappers, "what do ee want to buy the plews fur? Ye stand as good a chance o' hev'in' the reds gobble 'em as us."

"True," replied Garnet. "He must take his own chances on that. But my friend, whatever may happen, loses nothing. He is agent for a large house in New York."

From the Frenchman's appearance—for such the trader was—I knew these words were false. But of course I said nothing.

"Saintainlee," replied the trader. "I buy ze fur of mon-sieurs the trappeurs, an' eef I lose zem, I lose not'ing myself."

"Besides," added Garnet, "you may have them taken away, if you keep them; and then, you see, you will lose both money and skins."

"Who will take them?" demanded a gruff voice.

"Who? The Indians, of course."

"Well," said a trapper, "ye kin all do as ye please, ivery doggoned one o' ye. But as fur thes coon, he means to keep hes plews, he diz."

The speaker was Mark Cook. His words were not with

out their effect. It was plainly evident that the French trader did not please the trappers, and that they were determined to let their hard-earned skins lie where they were, for the present, at least.

Indeed, several were beginning to quit the spot, when a circumstance occurred which served to draw them back.

Among the spectators that had gathered round during this conversation, was an individual known well among the settlers by the name of John Schaley. He was a man of immense weight and stature, good-natured, generous to a fault, and a native of the greenest spot in the British isles—old Hibernia. John was unmarried, owned a small cabin in the settlement, subsisted generally by an old and very rusty army musket, but was oftentimes found doing an odd job or two for some of the settlers.

“Och!” said this individual. “By the powers! an’ yer words may be thrue. Whist! Let me spake a word.”

So saying, John approached the Frenchman, and said, in a voice loud enough for us to hear:

“Do yez pay a good price for shkins?”

“Yes, monsieur,” replied the trader. “For ze situation of affair, beaucoup—very mooch, you call him.”

“Well, than, whisper. I’ve got a shtack o’ shkins, an’ ef ye’ll pay me a good price for ’em, by jabers, they’re yours.”

“Très bien—ver’ well.”

With this, the Celt made off with all his speed toward his cabin, situated not more than a score of rods from the spot. Soon the gigantic Hibernian was seen to issue from his cabin, carrying in one hand an old-fashioned traveling-bag, and coming toward us with hasty strides.

A loud laugh from the trappers greeted his appearance, but, unheeding them, John kept on until he reached the trader’s side. The bag was then opened, and, with a smile of triumph, the owner brought forth its contents.

“Thare—a dozen mushkrat, one wolf, and two fox-skins,” said John. Without noticing the others, the Frenchman stooped down, and picked up one of the latter-named articles. It was a magnificent skin, having once covered the back of that rare animal, the Canada silver fox. It was a very large one, and had been trapped by the trapper Mark Cook, in the

best season. The trapper had exchanged it for a small, finely-finished gold watch the good-natured Irishman had, in some manner, obtained possession of while living in more civilized regions. For some moments the trader examined the article in his hands with undivided attention. His small orbs glittered greedily.

"For this, I shall allow you five dollars," said he, at last.

"Five dollars!" said the owner, the fact flashing through his mind, evidently, that the trapper had cheated him. "I was towld I could get thirty-five dollars for it."

Stepping up to the trader, who still held the object in his hands, I requested him to allow me to examine it for a moment. He handed it to me, but not without a look of suspicion, however.

"Gentlemen," said I, this is an unusually large skin, perfect in every respect. If it is not worth seventy dollars in New York, it is not worth a single copper."

"Monsieur—pardon me—ze skin is poisoned."

"Ye cussed, mean, stinkin' polecat!" cried the voice of Mark Cook, at that moment pushing forward. "Ye say that skin is poisoned, do ye? Hyur's the child as took him—now say thet ag'in!"

The Frenchman sprung back as if an electric shock had touched him, the trapper's words and appearance terrifying him.

"Hold!" said Garnet. "He is my friend."

"Durn you an' yer frien's, say I. The hull o' ye air a pack o' lyin' an' swindlin' thieves. Young man, ef ye takes thes coon's advice, ye'll clur out o' thes at onc't. Ye ain't a favorite hyur."

The young man turned crimson. The trapper's words stung him to the quick.

"Thank you for your advice," said he to the trapper, "but when I feel inclined, I'll come, and when I don't I'll stay away. If you think you can bully me, you are mistaken."

With these words the young man raised a small whistle to his lips, and the next instant its sound echoed over the river to the woods beyond.

The four men who had been left in charge of the scow heard the signal, climbed hastily up the river's bank, and came

toward us. They were evidently lumbermen. Each was tall and muscular, and would prove a fearful antagonist in a combat. Each was armed with a rifle, and all four carried in their belts a Bowie, and that fearful object in the hands of a foe, a Colt revolver!

In less than two-score seconds the men reached us.

"Now," said Garnet, "if you wish to drive us out, try it on."

These words were addressed, seemingly, to the trapper; but, as we all knew, the rest of us were entitled to claim shares in them.

Several of us threw ourselves alongside the trapper, but, as yet, we had not drawn our weapons, as we knew that the first click of a weapon on either side would have been the signal for a fearful combat. But that signal never came.

At that moment, several from the fort, who had heard the news, came upon the scene. Among these was M. Du Bois. His white hair fell upon his shoulders, his lips were set, as in anger, and from his calm eyes flashed glances of fire.

With firm steps he approached his nephew, and laid his hand heavily upon his shoulder.

"George Garnet," said the old man, in a stern voice, "is it thus that you repay me? Shame! Coward! Shame, I say! To think that a nephew of mine is in league with robbers like these, and that he comes in times like these, to create trouble. Now, sir, you seem to have command over these villains. Command them to leave instantly, or, by the God I trust! your blood shall be on your uncle's head! Quick! I am not the man to wait."

It was a fearful moment. Involuntarily my hand sought the handle of my revolver, for I knew not whether or no the villain might rebel even then against his uncle. But he did not. Trembling in every limb, he motioned to his companions to return to the scow. He was obeyed; and we soon saw the huge fellows disappear over the bank.

"Now, sir," said the old man, "follow them, and never let me see your face again—never dare, as long as I live, to set foot in this village again. Go!"

With a look, impossible to depict, the villain turned on his heel, and walked slowly away.

He reached the river. The scow was pushed out into the stream, and we had the satisfaction of seeing it rowed slowly up the stream. I—and so did Raven—knew that they would not proceed far.

That was the night on which Garnet was to meet Nau-wauna.

CHAPTER X.

THE FATAL RENDEZVOUS.

THE remainder of that day was monotonous enough.

But at length evening came, and we had the satisfaction of seeing the goddess of Night throw her black robe once more over the scene. Not the glittering of a single star was to be seen in the firmament overhead. The wild wind was sweeping through the tall tree-tops with fearful violence. It was a splendid night for the savages to attack the settlement ; and the sentries were doubled on the parapet of the fort, and a few trappers were secreted on the edges of the clearing, waiting patiently for the first signs of the coming foe.

About half-past seven three of us advanced toward the sentry that guarded the gate at the palisades, and whispered a word in his ear. The gate was unbarred, and we passed out. My companions were Mark Cook and the hunter, Raven.

“ Now then,” said I, “ let’s for the tree at once.”

Dark as was the night, we ran forward at a brisk trot. The pine for which we were aiming stood more than a mile from the village. We knew its situation well ; and we soon arrived not twenty yards from the spot on which it stood.

At a signal from the trapper, we came at once to a halt.

“ Boyees, thes air risky business. We’ve got to stalk one o’ the cutest Injins as iz roun’ hyur, I reckon.”

“ Well,” said Raven, “ I ain’t afraid to try it. I don’t set an Injin alongside me, by gosh !”

“ Wagh !” retorted the trapper. “ Who in thunder sed ye did ? Neither duz thes coen. What he sed war, thet ye’d hev to keep a mighty sharp look-out. Kum on, durn yer ; mind them long pegs o’ yourn don’t slip.”

Without taking any further notice of the old fellow’s grumblings, the hunter followed slowly in the trapper’s footsteps.

I, in turn, followed him; and, in that manner, we neared the tree.

Feeling satisfied that we had been the first ones to arrive on the spot, we secreted ourselves carefully among some bushes, not ten feet from the huge pine.

The note said that Garnet would be on the spot at eight o'clock. It was about half an hour since we had left the fort, therefore the time agreed upon had arrived. But, as yet neither of the two had come.

However, we were not disappointed in our expectations.

Some twenty minutes after the time agreed upon by Garnet, a figure stepped cautiously into the opening near the pine, and, feeling satisfied that all was safe, he seated himself on the ground, and began to whistle, but in a low key.

A few moments after, there was a rustling among the leaves, and another figure emerged into the opening.

"Ha! Nau-wauna."

"George."

I recognized both voices on the instant. They were those of Nau-wauna and George Garnet.

Thanks to the wind that blew from toward them to us, we could plainly hear every word spoken. I would not have missed a syllable for thousands.

"Well, George," began the Indian, "I suppose you have heard that our warriors have raised the hatchet? Last night Flying Squirrel and his band burned New Harlem."

"I know. Where is Flying Squirrel now?"

"Not more than ten miles from here, awaiting orders from me before they come on."

"Ha! Nau-wauna, as your friend, I advise you not to undertake to burn St. Catherine."

"Why?" asked the Indian, in an eager tone.

"I will tell you. You know that Reeves of whom you were so jealous last winter? Well, he is a smart fellow, and when the news of the expected outbreak arrived, he contrived a plan which, if the settlers have an opportunity to try it, will prove successful. It is a species of rocket, filled with bullets, slugs and pebbles, and capable of killing a score at a single discharge."

"This is true, then, George?"

"True!" replied the other. "Why, I saw Reeves trying them myself. They have got a hundred of them stored away in the fort."

For a few seconds the Indian was silent, then he said :

"Is it not possible for us, in some way, to destroy them?"

"It will be a difficult undertaking. The fort is well guarded, and they admit no strangers—but hold! There is an underground passage. We might avail ourselves of that."

"Very true. I know the passage well. You enter it from the cellar in the cabin of your uncle, M. Du Bois, and it will lead you inside the stockade. Once inside the fort, I will destroy every rocket they have, and then our warriors will finish the rest. But, George, let us speak of Virginie—your cousin. I have heard that M. Du Bois and she intend to leave the settlement, as soon as all is again quiet."

"Yes."

The Indian sprung up. His eyes fairly flashed fire.

"By the great Manitou! George Garnet," he said, "your cousin will never leave! Never! For four years I have waited for her to grow old enough to know what love is, and when that time comes, some one else comes and takes away that for which I have been waiting so long. I am, in the eyes of your people, an outlaw. Never mind. In spite of that I shall triumph yet!"

He said this with a proud voice. The trapper was seated next to me, and I could tell by his quick, spasmodic breathing, that the Indian's words had awakened his ire. The wind howled through the trees more violently than before. Afar off could be heard the hoarse rumbling of the thunder, as if portending a storm.

The Indian continued :

"Virginie Du Bois was raised as a child of the forest, and as a child of the forest she shall die. The pale-face who loves her may seek to entice her away, but he shall fail. He may be cunning, but he shall find that I am his equal. Before another moon shall pass, she shall sleep in my lodge. Even now—"

The Indian had said enough. Before his lips had time to pronounce another word, the click of the trapper's rifle caused him to pause. He would have turned and fled, but the crack

of Mark's rifle brought him at once to the earth. With a yell of terror, George Garnet fled like the wind.

Simultaneously, we rose to our feet, and ran toward the spot where the Indian was lying. Perceiving our approach, he raised himself on one knee, and whipped out a bowie. With this, he endeavoured to keep us at bay.

"Dogs!" he hissed. "Dogs! Hiss-sh-sh! You think you will have the satisfaction of—"

But before he could finish the sentence, a blow from the stock of the hunter's rifle laid him senseless.

"Kill him, durn him! Kill the varmint at onc't!" exclaimed the trapper, raising his clubbed rifle high above his head.

"Hold on!" exclaimed the hunter. "Don't kill him yit. We'll show his phiz to the boyees fust."

The trapper lowered his rifle.

"Wagh!" he said, "let thes coon fix hes mark on the varmint, an' then ye kin do with him as ye durned please."

Drawing from its sheath his knife, he knelt down by the Indian's side. Owing to the darkness, we could not perceive his next movements; but, in a second or two he rose to his feet again.

"Thar!" he said, as he returned his knife to its place. "Mark Cook hes fixed hes mark on the varmint's phiz. Thet 'll show thet the red's haar belongs to thes coon. He! he! he!"

Doubtless imagining that he had, in some manner, outwitted the hunter, the old fellow went off into a fit of chuckling. The bullet which had wounded Nau-wauna, had entered his right limb, a short distance above the knee. We could tell this from the flow of the blood. We bound the wound up with a strip of linen, then secured the Indian's arms, and waited until he should again return to consciousness.

For upward of twenty minutes, it seemed as if death had claimed the savage, but at last a low moan informed us that he still lived. He regained his senses, but it cost him a hard struggle. The hunter's arm was strong, and the blow he had dealt Nau-wauna would have proved fatal to one not gifted with more than ordinary vital tenacity.

He had no sooner obtained command over himself, than

Raven gave him a jerk which brought the Indian to his feet.

"Come," said the hunter. "You are our prisoner, an' ef ye don't do as we tell ye, why—well, ye kin guess the rest."

Knowing well the character of the men whose captive he was, Nau-wauna deemed it best to obey. He followed them, but moody and abstracted.

When we reached the fort, the hour was late, but the news that Nau-wauna was a prisoner, flew from mouth to mouth like wildfire. We placed the prisoner in a strong room, bound hand and foot, and placed a guard outside the door. Thus situated, we doubted not that he was perfectly secure. The passage leading from the fort to the outside was also blocked up, so that, apparently, every avenue of escape was cut off.

CHAPTER XI.

WAUNONA AND THE RED-AX.

EARLY the following morning, I set out for the cabin of Frederic Reeves. I had not seen my friend for some time. Of late, a greater attraction for me than he existed, and the friendship that had existed between Reeves and myself was still upon my memory, but I visited his cabin less often than of old.

The gale that had been blowing the night previous still raged, and the tall and majestic pines bowed their heads to its force.

I entered the forest, and walked briskly forward. Knowing that Indian prowlers might be near, I kept a steady watch on my path.

But nothing important attracted my attention; and at last I emerged into the opening upon which stood the lone cabin.

A glance at the ground caused me to stop. Stooping down I examined it well. It had been trampled down, as if many feet had passed over it. The footprints in the young grass were plainly evident. Their shape, size, and other characteristics were not to be mistaken. They had been made by Indians—by Ojibwahs. Their moccasins are different from those of any other tribe, and even an indifferent frontiersman can tell them on the instant.

With a beating heart I entered the cabin.

I was met near the doorway by the dog Hannibal. On seeing me, he began to whine in a piteous tone. A glance further on, and the sight that met my gaze was fearful. Fallen across the back of a chair, that had been upset in the struggle, was the ghastly corpse of an Indian. He had not been shot. No, he had met his death in a different manner. A ghastly wound in his throat showed where the dog had made short work of it—the larynx being literally torn open.

“Where can Reeves be?” I asked myself, half aloud.

The dog seemed to understand the words, for he uttered a

low howl, and walked toward the door. I followed him. He led me outside, then struck out on a slow trot for the forest. Seeing that I did not feel inclined to follow him, the intelligent animal stopped and commenced to wag his tail. I knew that to have followed the animal alone would have been at once an act worthy of a madman. I felt certain that Reeves was a prisoner, and what could I benefit him alone? To have followed his tracks would only have led me into a similar situation, inexperienced as I was in the mysteries of woodcraft.

No, I would return at once to the fort, procure the aid of as many hunters and trappers as could safely leave, and set out upon the trail of the savages at once.

With this resolve I turned on my heel, and began to retrace my steps toward the settlement.

With the dog following at my heels, I crossed the opening and plunged hastily into the forest. Before I had advanced a dozen rods, the dog gave utterance to a savage growl, and, with set ivories and gleaming eyes, came to a stop.

Quick as thought, I cocked my rifle, expecting, nevertheless, to hear the whiz of an arrow every instant. I stood still, for I knew not in which quarter the danger lay; and to step in any direction might place me in a worse situation than the one I occupied then.

For some moments the dog was silent. Then he growled again, this time louder and fiercer than the last. He slightly crouched, as if intending to spring forward. A word from me, and, doubtless, the courageous animal would have done so.

As yet, no deadly arrow had whizzed forth, or other signal of an enemy's presence; and I began to ask myself if it might not be some animal that had caused the dog to growl.

While I was still undetermined as to what to think—whether to move forward or not—an object presented itself which at once put a stop to all speculations.

From behind the bushes some few yards in advance, there suddenly appeared the figure of an Indian—a woman. I knew her on the instant. It was the Sioux wife of the outlawed Ojibwah chief, Zach-a-kana, the great Red-ax.

“Down, sir!” I said to the dog.

He gave a low growl, and lay down at full length upon the ground.

Seeing this, the Indian woman walked boldly forward.

"Pale-face," she said, extending her hand, "have you forgotten me?"

"No. You are Waunona."

"Yes. The pale-face saved Waunona's life, and she seeks to repay him. His friend is among the Ojibwahs."

"I thought as much," I answered. "I am going to the settlement for men, and we shall try to save him."

"Go not, pale-face, go not! The Ojibwahs are coming. They await you in ambush. There is but one who can lead you to your friend."

"One! Who?" I asked.

"Who? My husband, Zach-o-kana, the Red-ax."

She said this in a proud voice. Raising her slender arm, she pointed with it toward the west.

"He is there. Follow Waunona, and Zack-o-kana will repay the kindness of the pale-face to his squaw. Ha! pale-face, little do you know how Waunona suffered that night. Even while she was hiding from the anger of the pale-face whose dog Winona wounded, her *pau-loopah** froze at her breast."

"But," said I, "Waunona forgets. Remember, the one who sought to do her harm is the one she seeks to free."

"Waunona knows it. He is your friend?"

"Yes."

"You saved Waunona's life?"

"Probably."

"Then she will repay you. Come."

I followed her without an instant's hesitation. An Indian never forgets a kind act, and I knew that she would not fail to fulfill her promise.

Though an Ojibwah, Zach-o-kana was no friend of theirs. He had committed the crime of marrying a squaw from among their deadly enemies, the Sioux, and for that his tribe had banished him from their midst.

Many were the stories that were afloat regarding him. I had heard that he was a man of immense stature and strength,

* Pappoose, in the Ojibwah tongue.

and that he lived—where, no one knew. In vain had his tribe endeavored to trace him to his abode, but every effort made had proved fruitless indeed.

We proceeded on in a direction that would, if kept, cause us to strike the river nearly two miles below the settlement.

The dog did not follow us, but returned to the cabin. I would have had the animal's company, but he had not forgotten the cause of the wounds from which he had but recently recovered, and his conduct toward the Indian woman was savage in the extreme.

We reached the river, and at a point where it was overhung by a high cliff. I remembered the cliff well. I had passed it in the winter, the reader will remember, with the trapper, Mark Cook.

An extremely steep, narrow and difficult path enabled us to reach the water. It was a wild spot. Above our heads towered the cliff, steep and rugged. Here and there huge rocks jutted out until they fairly overhung the water many feet below them. From some of these hung creeping vines, serving for the repositories of numberless birds' nests.

At that spot the river was somewhat shallow along the bank, and the consequence was a thick growth of rushes, and the rotten straws of last year's crop of wild rice.

From this my companion drew forth a canoe. It was a beautiful craft, light, and but large enough to carry two persons.

From the canoe Waunona drew a small bundle. With the greatest of dexterity she opened this, and, to my astonishment, drew forth a complete suit of Indian garments. Head-dress, breeches, moccasins, blanket—all were there.

The truth flashed upon me. I was expected to turn Indian.

For a moment I felt like laughing. But a moment's reflection convinced me that I might, by so doing, offend my companion.

"There," she said. "If the pale-face be not too proud, let him wear these."

I threw my cap into the canoe, and placed on my head the ornamented head-dress. In a few moments my hunter's

garb was completely concealed by that of the gaudy savage.

The woman next produced a small cake of paint, of a copperish hue. With her assistance this was rubbed over every part of my face, hands and arms. A few fancy touches of blue and vermilion, and the transformation was complete. Verily, I doubted not that I looked a veritable Denizen of the woods.

I could not but smile. I fancied, too, that I could detect a smile upon the face of my companion; but, in this I might have been mistaken.

We entered the canoe. Each of us seized a paddle, and, heading the craft down-stream, we caused it to fly over the water like an arrow.

We kept well in the center of the stream, and I kept a constant look-out on each bank, as we shot by. My Sioux companion handled the paddle like the adept she was. Her easy and graceful motions, as she rose and dipped the paddle, were beautiful to witness.

We continued our course. We had been unseen by any bands of prowling savages, or, if we had been seen, we had been allowed to remain unmolested.

In less than an hour's time from the time we had embarked, Waunona suddenly signaled to me to head the canoe sharply in shore. I complied, and soon found myself beneath a large cliff, similar to the one under which we had embarked.

My companion now requested me to allow her the entire management of the canoe.

With surprising quickness, she gave the paddle she held a few sweeps and twists, and the canoe shot like a dart between two huge rocks.

The cleft, some five feet in width, extended up some dozen rods. On each side, the rocks towered up perpendicularly for a hundred feet.

On arriving at what had, at first, seemed to be the end of this singular passage, an aperture in one of its sides was suddenly seen, sufficiently large to admit the passage of a man's body.

Following the example of my companion, I stepped from

the canoe onto a large flat rock lying at the mouth of the opening. Slightly inclining my head, I entered the cavern which was dark as Egypt. The canoe was next drawn in, in order to hide it from the view of any one who might chance to stray up that singular passage.

Had we arrived at our journey's end? Was this, then, the far-famed abode of the dreaded Zach-o-kana?

No. Not yet. Grasping my arm, my companion led me forward. On, on we went, turning into passage after passage, until at length the daylight again streamed upon us, with a suddenness that nearly blinded me.

I now stood upon a rock of huge dimensions. The space before me was some hundred feet square at the base. On every side the rocks towered up, pyramid-like, until their rugged points nearly touched each other at their summit.

Casting my eyes directly forward, I perceived on the other side of the space before me the dark opening of another cavern. Before this could be reached another sheet of water must be crossed.

But while I had been occupying my brain in noting these strange things, my companion had not been idle. She had produced from some dark recess another canoe, much larger and stronger than the last one, and into this she beckoned me to step.

She stepped in after me. A few vigorous sweeps of the paddle, and we had crossed the sheet of water, and again debarked at the mouth of the other cavern.

Scarcely had we done so, when, from the cavern, there emerged an individual who would, even in a less strange place, have attracted my attention in a more than ordinary manner.

It was, I knew well, although I had never seen him before, Zach-o-kana. He was a splendid savage, in looks. He stood above six feet in his moccasins, stout in proportion, and when he stood up, he was straight as an arrow. His garb was plain, extremely so. Not a single ornament of any description was conspicuous upon it. His hair was long, plaited, and ornamented only by a single eagle-feather.

He approached us.

"Pale-face, my husband. This is Zach-o-kana, the great Red-ax."

The savage held out his hand, which was taken with good will. As I had an opportunity for doing so, I resolved to make this singular man my friend. I had befriended Waunona, and I felt that the task would be an easy one.

"Pale-faced medicine-man, the Red-ax welcomes you," said the chief.

He called me medicine-man. How knew he that I was a disciple of Galen and Hippocrates? But, surprised as I was, I, of course, said nothing!

The canoe was secured, and we entered the cavern, which, owing to the size of the opening, was light enough to enable me to see all it contained. At one end was burning a small fire; the smoke found its egress in a small hole, far above us. On the smooth, rocky floor, lay several robes, an immense bow, a tomahawk, and a quiver of arrows.

This, as far as I could see, was all the cavern contained. Truly, report had not exaggerated the account of this wild spot. Here, with no one but himself to guard it, Zach-o-kana could keep at bay a thousand enemies at once.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GIANT LEADS THE WAY.

THAT night, long after sunset, along with the chief, I emerged from the cavern. We crossed the sheet of water, entered the other cavern, and I was led on until we arrived at the passage that ran parallel to the river. After producing a canoe, we both entered, and I soon found myself once more afloat. The canoe was not the same which I had been in that morning, but a much larger and stronger one.

We shot rapidly up the long passage, and quickly found ourselves far out on the river.

Zach-o-kana headed the craft up-stream, he occupying the bow, and I the stern end. It was spring-time, and the recently melted snow had swollen the stream, making it extremely rapid. But, by our united exertions, we succeeded in stemming it at a rapid rate.

About ten o'clock, we passed St. Catherine. It was moonlight, and one or two dark objects upon the parapet told me that the sentries were on the alert for danger. As we shot by, my heart slightly fell. I thought of Virginie. Would she wonder why I was absent? I had left the fort without saying a word to any one, and now, for the first time, the conviction flashed upon my mind that I should be missed, and perhaps sought after, if I were not back early in the morning.

"How far is it," I asked my companion, "to the village of the Ojibwahs?"

"About an hour's journey," was the reply.

"Then we shall return before morning?"

The question caused the chief to smile.

"Perhaps, my pale-face friend. The Ojibwahs are like the serpent," he said, "fierce and cunning. We may return soon, and we may not return at all."

The words were spoken cheerfully enough, but, I knew not at the time why, they sent a cold chill through me, caus-

ing me to cease, for a moment, to ply my paddle. The Indian noticed this, for he said:

"Do you fear the journey?"

"Hardly," I answered, with a light laugh.

Some little time after passing the village, the Red-ax headed the canoe toward the shore. It was at that point on the creek near which, a few days before, Nau-wauna had landed. With all his strength, the chief now plied the paddle, and the canoe was made to enter the creek. Owing to its extreme shallowness at that point, it took all our best exertions to overcome the difficulty and arrive where the water was deeper. But before we had proceeded far, another difficulty met us. This was the thick growth of rushes, already alluded to in a former chapter.

It was in vain that we plied our paddle with all our energy, we could make no faster progress than, at most, a mile an hour. But my experienced companion was equal to the difficulty. Gradually forcing the canoe close to the bank, he told me to spring ashore. I did so; and he followed. I now perceived his intention. We dragged the canoe up on the bank, and, seizing it by the gunwales, dragged it along the bank until a point of the creek was reached where the rushes ceased to grow. It was but the work of a moment to launch the vessel again, embark, and continue our course up the stream.

We kept on until at least three miles had been passed over, then we suddenly found ourselves in close proximity to a large pine, whose roots were to be seen protruding through the bank along the creek, sucking up the water which served for the tree's nourishment.

It was at this spot that we landed.

The canoe was hauled up on the bank, and concealed beneath a clump of willows.

"There," said my companion. "Do you see that hill?"

About a mile from us, towering up high in the air was a steep bluff, and it was toward this he pointed.

"I do," was my answer.

"It is well. Beyond that lies the village."

Our course lay through a thick growth of hazel-bushes until we reached the base of the hill. We could have avoided

these, by going in another direction, but the former way, in the end, was much the shortest.

We reached the base of the hill. Here the Indian came to an abrupt halt; and, for a moment, stood as if irresolute.

Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him; and, bidding me wait where I was, he drew his blanket round him, and ascended the hill at a rate astonishingly rapid. I watched him until the darkness prevented me from following his movements further; then, seating myself upon the ground, I resolved to wait patiently for his return.

Scarce five minutes had elapsed after his departure, when a slight noise at my back caused me to look that way. To my surprise, I saw that the noise was made by the tread of a moccasin. Not a dozen paces away, and coming slowly toward me *was an Indian!*

I felt my blood turn cold, as it coursed through my veins. For a second, I sat there as if spell-bound. But, perceiving that I was as yet unperceived by him, I began to think there was yet a chance for escape, although, it must be acknowledged, that chance was slight.

True, I could have shot him; and, if it were my only resort I resolved to do so, notwithstanding the warning of Zach-o-kana; who had informed me that the firing of a single shot would tend to put our enemies on the alert.

How should I avoid it? I was seated in the center of a level piece of ground, with not a single bush less than a dozen feet away. There was, as far as I could see, but one way. That was, to lie flat upon the ground, and thus the savage *might* pass me by unnoticed.

Quick as the idea struck me, it was acted upon. I threw myself flat upon the dark ground, in such a position that I could watch the savage's progress well; and, if he discovered me, I would fire.

Thanks be to fortune, at that time the moon was hid by some clouds, and this was one advantage in my favor.

The savage was by this time, not ten feet away. He seemed in some manner wounded; and I could distinctly hear his laborious breathing as he progressed.

On, on he comes. I am still unperceived. I may still be ~~safe~~ safe. He is now—Heavens! It is he—it is Nau-wanna

"He must have escaped!" I exclaimed to myself, but in so loud a tone that the Indian must certainly have overheard me, had not his thoughts been too much occupied elsewhere.

But he did not, and, to my gratification, he passed by without noticing me.

He turned the base of the cliff, and disappeared from my sight.

He had no sooner done so than I glanced up the hill. I perceived the Red-ax. In a few moments he reached my side. Before I had time to narrate what I had just discovered—the escape of Nau-wauna—he said:

"Ugh! My pale-faced friend is cunning. Zach-o-kana saw all. Do you know the Ojibwah who passed?"

"Yes. It was Nau-wauna."

"Ugh! I thought so. He is hurt."

"Yes. The other night he was shot in the leg, and taken prisoner. He has escaped."

"Yes. Ugh! Nau-wauna is a bad Indian. The Red-ax and he are enemies. But come. The moon grows high."

Our next course lay around the base of the cliff, opposite to that taken by Nau-wauna. As we progressed Zach-o-kana informed me as to the cause of his sudden departure up the hill. He wished to ascertain exactly the locality of the Ojibwah village before entering it, as, from the summit it could be plainly seen. The knowledge gained would be of no small service to us, when we came to use it.

A walk of three quarters of a mile, and we had rounded the cliff, and were heading for the village.

Poor Reeves! I wondered what he was doing at that moment. Lying awake, no doubt, his mind filled with dreadful thoughts of what his fate would be. Little did he dream that his friend was so near him.

Presently a light flashing among the trees some distance in front, told us that the village was close at hand.

"See!" said my companion, drawing aside a bush, "we must pass them. That is the band from the north. Flying Squirrel is their chief. The village further on. My pale-face friend must be very careful."

We pressed forward. If I never knew before what the word careful meant, I knew it then. The rustle of a leaf, the

snapping of a twig, and our lives would, perhaps, have been worth but little.

Around at least a score of fires were lying dozens of warriors, sleeping. At intervals, here and there, a solitary figure loomed up. These were the sentinels.

We succeeded, with the utmost of caution, in passing these, and then found ourselves close to the Indian village.

“Ho-chee-ee ! Ho-chee-ee !”

These were the words that, at that instant, pealed forth from a hundred throats. It was the war-cry of Ojibwahs !

“Ho-chee-ee ! Ho-chee-ee ! Ho-chee-ee !”

Again the fearful cry pealed forth, this time from the warriors at our left—the band of Flying Squirrel.

Heavens ! Were we discovered ?

I turned to my companion, who was as calm as the face of a rock, and put the question to him.

“It is Nau-wauna,” he answered. “He calls the warriors to the council.”

Secreted behind a large clump of hazel-bushes, we watched what would happen. It was impossible for us to do any thing further then, for warriors were rushing about in every direction.

The situation we occupied commanded a fine view of the village. We could see some of the warriors enter the forest, and quickly return with loads of wood. These were pitched into one common heap, and kindled into a blaze.

This was the council-fire, and, late as was the hour, the warriors began to gather round it.

We waited until the calumet had been filled, and began to circulate from warrior to warrior, then we, on our part, prepared for action.

“Come,” said the Red-ax, “let us be moving. While the council lasts it will be easy.”

As carefully as ever, we moved toward the circle of warriors. Step after step we advanced, the situation becoming each moment more awful to me. My nerves were not as steady as I could have wished for. The war-cry breaking forth so suddenly had unnerved me.

“See !” said my companion, pointing toward a dark object on the ground, some distance ahead. “That is your friend. Wait. Zach-o-kana will bring him to you.”

Obedient to his will, I remained where I was.

I could see the noble warrior as he crept forward, as swiftly and silently as a serpent. I saw him reach the figure upon the ground, then stretch forth his hand and touch him. The figure raised itself on its elbow, and gazed around. The light of the fire caused the blade of a knife to gleam, as the savage drew it forth, and, with a few quick motions, severed the thongs. The prisoner was free.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER DENOUEMENT.

A FEW seconds later, and both men stood by my side.

Reeves scrutinized me closely, for a moment, but, failing to penetrate through my disguise, I said to him:

“Well, my friend, have you forgotten me?”

He knew my voice. An ejaculation of surprise escaped his lips, and grasping my hand, he exclaimed:

“Montgomery! I never should have known you! How came you to hit upon this garb, eh?”

I was about to enter into a short explanation, when the chief enjoining silence, we followed him away from the village.

Rounding the base of the hill, we headed directly for the creek. This reached, we found the canoe exactly as we had left it, and were not long in embarking.

The river reached, we shot rapidly down it for a short distance, and landed directly opposite the fort.

I say we landed. Two of us—but not the third, the Red-ax. The noble chief refused to accompany us, saying that the fort was no place for a warrior to fight. He would not, he said, desert our cause; but, under the cover of the forest he loved so well, he would watch over us.

He pushed his craft from the bank, and soon disappeared in the darkness.

It wanted but an hour or so to daylight.

We walked rapidly toward the fort. Arrived there, we were challenged by the sentry at the stockade. I gave the countersign, and we were permitted to pass inside. The sentry proved to be Raven.

“Whew! young feller,” he exclaimed, as his eyes fell upon me. “Rigged Injin style, eh? Ha! ha!”

My disguise had deceived Reeves, but the hawk-like eyes of the hunter had pierced through it instantly.

“Mark an’ I war gettin’ skeered about ye,” continued the

hunter; "no less nor war another, the pretty leetle Virginnny. Wagh! she hev axed arter ye a hunnerd times, since mornin'."

Delightful as was this news to me, I hardly gave it a second thought. The hour of our peril was fast advancing, and we could not, I knew, prepare to meet it too soon.

"Raven," said I, "how came Nau-wauna to escape?"

"Wha-at?" drawled the hunter. "What do you mean?"

"What I said. How came your prisoner to escape?"

Raven laughed.

"Jokin', eh?"

"Not at all. Is it possible, Raven," said I, seriously, "that you were not aware that Nau-wauna had escaped?"

"Air ye in airnest, doctor?"

"I am. Come, lead me to the room in which he was confined, and you can see for yourself."

"I'll do it, by jingo!" said the hunter.

After firmly securing the gate, we went to the apartment in which had been secured the wounded Indian. Raven was the first to enter the room. Before he had advanced three paces, he stumbled against some object upon the floor. Stooping down, his hand came in contact with what he knew to be the prostrate body of a man.

"Wait hyur!" he said, in an excited tone; and rising to his feet, he hurriedly quitted the apartment.

Ere long he returned, bearing in his hand a lighted torch.

A fearful sight met our view. On the floor lay the dead body of the trapper who had been placed to keep watch over the prisoner. Poor fellow! He had lain there for some time, and was now cold and stiff. Lying close by the corpse was a knife, a finely-finished, long-bladed one.

Reeves picked it up. He examined the weapon closely for a few seconds, then gave vent to a low whistle.

"Raven," he said to the hunter, "do you know whose knife this is?"

"Yes," was the reply

"Well, whose is it?"

"It belongs," replied Raven, without a second's hesitation, "to George Garnet."

"True," said Reeves. "See, here is his name."

I took the weapon from his hand, and examined it. Sure enough, engraved upon a small plate inserted in the handle, were the words "*George Garnet. From B. F.*"

For a few moments a deep silence followed.

"Wagh!" said the hunter, at last, "how could the Injin 'a' got hold o' thet knife, I shed like to know. He hedn't it about him when he war captured, I'm dog-goned sartin. I a'rched the varmint myself."

"Right, Bilee!" exclaimed a voice at our rear. It was the voice of the trapper, Mark Cook. He had entered so softly that we had not detected him, and was standing near the doorway, leaning upon his rifle.

"Come, for'ards, Mark," said the hunter. "We want yer opinion here. It'll sort o' puzzle ye, ef I ain't mistaken."

"Ye want this child's opeenyun, eh?" said the trapper, advancing toward us.

Kneeling down at the dead man's side, the trapper examined well the wound that had caused the man's death.

The old fellow rose to his feet.

"Thet stab," said he, "warn't did by an Injin. No, sирее, thes coon ain't so soople as he war some yeern ago, hes eyesight ain't so good as it war, nayther; but, fur all thet, he kin tell the way a red-skin uses a knife from thet o' a white man!"

"Raven," said Reeves, a sudden idea seeming to have taken possession of him, "have you seen George Garnet to-day?"

The hunter replied in the negative.

"Have any strangers been admitted into the fort?"

"No—yes, one—a peddler. He air hyur now. He arrived hyur about sundown, an' wanted to stay all night. Of course, I hed no raison fur refusin' him, so I let him in."

"Ha!" exclaimed Reeves. "Go and bring him here, Raven, will you? Perhaps he wül happen to know something about this knife."

Without a word, the hunter strode from the room.

After a lapse of about ten minutes, he returned, accompanied by a tall, red-haired and spectacled man, whose physiognomy, apparently, was that of a German.

His eyes fell upon the dead body of the trapper.

"Bless us! Vat ish dis?" he exclaimed.

"You are a peddler, eh?" asked Reeves.

"I ish," was the answer.

"Do you deal in knives?"

"No. I sellsh no knivesh."

"Ha! Well"—producing the fatal weapon found upon the floor—"did you ever see this before?"

The man started. It was very slight, but still sufficient to be perceptible. And, with a calm voice, he denied ever having seen the knife before.

"Think again," said Reeves, in an equally calm tone.

The man now lost his self-possession.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed, stamping his foot. "What do you take me for, eh?"

"For what you are," said Reeves. "A traitor, a coward, and a liar! There!"

With these words, Reeves executed a few quick motions. To our surprise, the man's wig, beard and spectacles dropped to the floor, *and standing before us, with cheeks pale as death, was George Garnet!*

For some seconds after this *denouement*, the villain stood still, and as apparently unmoved as a rock. Suddenly, however, he cast a covert glance toward the door; and, the next instant he attempted to dart toward it. But before he had time to advance a single step, the hand of Raven was laid heavily upon his shoulder, causing him to halt.

"Hold on!" said the hunter. "We ain't through yit, I reckon. Kumrades, what's to be did with him?"

"Lynch him!" suggested Mark Cook.

"No," said Reeves. "Let him be fairly tried first. Undoubtedly, he is guilty, but give him a chance to prove his innocence, if he is able to do so."

"Agreed!" exclaimed the trapper. "Thes coon 'll fetch the boyecs."

By this time it was daylight. The first rays of the rising sun were just appearing above the distant horizon.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERRUPTED TRIAL.

It did not occupy much time for the trapper to collect together a number of others; and then, after listening to a recital of what had transpired, loud and excited voices demanded an immediate trial.

The prisoner was conducted outside the stockade to the forest, in order that the proceedings might not be witnessed by those in the fort.

The office of judge was offered to Reeves, but was declined. It was next offered to Cub Jones, a large, brutal-looking fellow, and readily accepted.

Arranging themselves in a circle, the rude trial began.

The first witness was the hunter, Raven. He testified to having admitted the prisoner into the stockade, and that was the last he saw of him until the next morning. Also, that the knife belonging to him (Garnet) was not in the Indian's possession when captured by himself and Mark Cook. Upon finishing this evidence, a murmur of vengeance ran through the crowd. Even an indifferent observer would have seen that the fate of the wretch had already been settled upon. This mockery only tended still more to increase the terror of his situation.

"Come, Cook," said the judge; "ye're the next witness. Let's hear whet ye've got to say, durn ye, an' quick about it."

The old trapper brought the stock of his rifle from his shoulder to the ground with a heavy thud. Leaning upon it, and after taking a peculiar survey of the crowd, he said:

"Ye want to know thes coon's opeenyun, eh? Wal, hes opeenyun air, thet what Bilee said just now is correct, sez I. When thes coon saw the red-skin last, he war safe an' sound, 'ithout a single weepun about him. Wal, to continue, thes feller hyur, as war a-playing the peddler, slept near thes coon, an' last night, about six or seven hours arter dark,

he got up, an' went outside. I didn't foller him, for I didn't see thet it w'u'd 'a' been any use. In a leetle while he returned, lay down ag'in, an' slept like a top till morn'n'. Thet's all."

"Wal, prisoner," said the judge, "what've ye got to say for yese'f, eh?"

Garnet preserved a strict silence.

"Speak!" said Jones. "Air ye guilty, or not?"

"Judge for yourselves," was the uncivil answer.

"Wal, then, under the sarkumstances, I pronounce ye guilty o' the murder o' Josh Blane; an' accordin' to trapper law, sintence ye to be histed up by the neck. Get the rope, boyees."

One of the trappers, expecting the way things would turn, had taken the precaution to bring along with him a stout buckskin lasso. This he produced. One end of it was flung over a branch of a tree—the other fastened round the miserable man's neck.

Another moment, and, doubtless, the villain would have suffered for his crime; but, at that instant, a loud, fearful shriek—the shriek of a woman—broke upon our ears, causing the trappers to stay their proceedings.

She who had uttered the shriek approached, rushed up to the prisoner and threw her arms about his neck.

It was a girl—young and very beautiful. Her chestnut hair fell in luxuriant masses down her back, and her large blue eyes, were fearfully distended by combined grief and terror.

Upon seeing her, George Garnet gave way for the first time to his feelings. He threw his arms around his companion, and, like her, wept.

"No! no! no! George," she exclaimed, wildly. "You are innocent, I know. They shall not murder you!"

Suddenly—before we had recovered from the surprise into which her appearance had thrown us—the young girl drew from her girdle a small, shining knife. With this, she severed the lasso that had been placed round her lover's neck in a twinkling.

"Now," said she, facing us, "let me see what you will do. I am not a man. I am but a woman. But, as true as there

exists in heaven a God, as true will I plunge this knife into the bosom of him who first dares to raise his hand against what I have done."

Her deep voice, her heaving bosom and flashing eyes were not to be mistaken. The trappers saw that she was in earnest, and that, if aggravated to it, would not hesitate for a single instant to fulfill her words to the letter. In her passive state, woman is the emblem of peace, kindness and gentleness; but aroused, like the wounded tiger, her savageness knows no bounds.

She was only a woman, and armed only with a small knife, but there was not one of the trappers that cared to openly oppose her at that moment.

"You have your rifles," she continued. "Shoot me, if there be any one among you coward enough to do it."

Brave as lions themselves, the trappers were the ones to appreciate it in others.

"Bravo!" "Sound, thur, by gosh!" "Hooroo, gal!" were some of the exclamations to which the men gave vent.

"Ay, comrades," began Mark Cook, "thur's a raal specimen o' a woman, fur ye. Such as she—"

But he did not finish his sentence, for, at that instant, a yell, fierce and vengeful, fell like a knell upon our ears.

The sound came from the clearing. I glanced thither, and oh! what a sight greeted me.

Among the cabins, thick as bees around a hive, were Indians, painted in all the hideousness possible to the forest savage! Many were armed with burning firebrands. Those who held these rushed inside the cabins, and soon smoke was to be seen ascending from each.

"There," said the young girl, pointing toward the fearful spectacle; "there is blood enough for you. Be careful, or you may suffer, ere long, for your own deeds."

"Gal," said Mark Cook, "thes young feller—your luvyer I suppose—is the cussedist, meanist young cuss thes coon iver sot hes peepers on, by gosh! Wal, it war our intenshuns to hang him, as he desarves; but seein' you cottons to him so much, I fur one, gives him his liberty, providin' he promises niver to shew hes ugly phiz aroun' hyur ag'in. He is on good terms wi' the reds, an' he kin go to 'em."

"Ay," said ten voices, simultaneously, "let him go; an good shuts to bad company."

Garnet did not move.

"Come," said a voice, "clar out, durn ye!"

"Come, dear George," said the young girl, attempting to draw him away, "let us go."

"And you, Mary?" asked he, of her.

"Me! I will go with you—anywhere."

Then without a word more, the villain took her hand; and, with rapid steps they quitted the spot, heading directly for the savages in the clearing.

I watched their progress with a beating heart. Something whispered within me that something fearful must soon ensue. This proved to be true.

The lovers advance. They have reached the edge of the clearing, and fearlessly debouch from the woods. On, on they press. Another rod, and they suddenly become the target of two hundred pairs of eyes. A score of bows instantly drawn.

"Hold! they are friends!"

It was the voice of Nau-wauna, calling to his warriors.

Too late.

Before the chief fairly had time to utter his warning, twenty arrows were whizzing like lightning through the air. We saw George Garnet throw his hands wildly above his head, and the next instant he fell to the earth, pierced by a dozen arrows.

A fearful, heart-rending shriek rung again and again through the wood, and the young girl threw herself upon the form of her dead lover. We saw a score of warriors rush toward her, among them Nau-wauna. The latter seized her by the arms, and, using all his strength, brought her to a standing position. He next pointed toward the fort, as if commanding her to go there. But she only answered by kneeling down by the dead man's side, and giving vent to sobs and groans.

Seeing this, Nau-wauna made a sign to his warriors; and they immediately returned to their former position, further from us.

Of course, the savages, being unaware of our position, gave

us no trouble ; and this, as we all saw, was a matter of no small consequence. We could watch their every movement easily, and, it is but needless to add, we improved the opportunity.

CHAPTER XV.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

"WELL," said Reeves, "I am afraid that those rockets in the fort will prove to be of very little use."

"Oh!" said I, "because there is no one there who understands how to use them properly?"

"Exactly," he answered.

"You might succeed by some stratagem or other, in reaching the fort."

"Easily said, my friend, but not so easily done."

"You might make a dash for it, we covering you with our rifles."

"Then, of course, your whereabouts would be found out. Ha! ha!"

I had forgotten this fact.

The trappers had been listening during this, but none of them offered to give a solution to the difficulty in question.

Deeper than any of them, Reeves hit upon a plan, which, if we were fortunate enough to succeed in it, would be well enough.

"Let me take that dress of yours"—referring to the Indian costume which I still wore—"and I think I can reach the fort. I will boldly approach near to where the savages are, and then head for the fort. If they suspect me before I am beyond the range of their arrows, I am lost; if not, I shall reach the fort."

"Wagh!" said one of the trappers. "Thet's rayther a risky job—a durned sight riskier than I shed like to embark in."

"Nothing ventured nothing gained," remarked Reeves. "Come, doctor, the duds, quick."

Reeves was a downright Englishman—stubborn as a mule; and all attempts to dissuade him from his purpose would have been but futile on our part.

A very few moments sufficed for me to doff my Indian gar-

ments, and I had the satisfaction of seeing myself once more in my favorite buck-skin.

Reeves donned the garments with the utmost celerity. When he came to the last, there was one thing missing—the paint.

Where was that to be obtained?

“Ha!” said Reeves. “Verily, I had forgotten that little particular. Never mind, however, I must contrive it so as not to allow the devils to get a glance at my face.”

He was ready for the desperate undertaking. The disguise was fearfully incomplete, but he was none the less eager to carry out his rash design.

Leaving his rifle leaning against a tree near us, Reeves marked well the situation of the enemy; then, without a word, he strode quickly toward them, taking care that the trees concealed him until the proper moment for showing himself.

He disappeared from our view. Our enemies, on their part, had ceased their yells, and appeared to be, as well as we could judge by their movements, making active preparations for the siege. The savages were divided into two parties. One—the larger—was formed in a semicircle around the fort, taking care, however, to keep out of the range of the rifles of those guarding it. The other party was engaged in a different manner. Standing near one of the burning cabins, was a rude, backwoods wagon. This had been drawn into the center of the clearing, and the savages in charge of it were engaged in piling upon its front end a breastwork of logs. Their design was evident. Protected by the logs the savages could push the wagon up to the palisades, and, with their tomahawks, soon make an opening for their comrades to rush inside. Then, owing to their superiority in numbers, the fort would be at their mercy.

Of course, this plan was formed by Nau-wauna. It was cunning and plausible enough, certainly; but that knife which had been left on the floor when he made his escape from the fort, was partially the cause of its proving to be a failure.

“Waugh!” said one of the trappers, “looker thur! Thet means bizness, anyways.”

“Sartin,” said another. “Lucky we’re hyur. We kin put a sockdollager onto thet at onc’t.”

"Not hyur. They'll be too fur off fur our rifles."

"In coorse. Ye see thet clump o' hazels over thur? Wal, we kin git thur aisy enough, an' thet'll be class enough to pepper thunder out o' 'em."

At that moment, Reeves emerged into sight. Good Heavens! He had, either through intention or else miscalculation, approached the savages until not a dozen yards lay between him and them.

As yet, they had failed to notice him. On he pressed, imitating the slouchy, rolling gait of the forest savage to perfection. Before long, the eyes of a hundred of them are upon him.

I looked anxiously to see if he was suspected. To all appearances, no. If he succeeded in keeping his face concealed, he might accomplish his design without difficulty.

Most of the savages to his rear were silently watching him. Those in front had not, as yet, perceived him.

On he presses. Has neared those surrounding the fort—and, a moment later he passes them. It is a fearful sight to see him so near his bloodthirsty enemies, when a single misstep would be sufficient to betray him. Oh!

A fearful oath breaks from the lips of one of the trappers. Ha! I did not need to ask why—the cause was too fearfully evident for that. Debouching from the woods, and running at full speed toward Reeves, is a huge and shaggy animal. I recognize him at a glance. So does Mark Cook, Raven, and one or two others. It is the dog Hannibal.

"Waugh!" exclaimed Raven. "Thet dorg 'll be the death o' him. Lookee thur! He's making straight fur him, as if Old Nick hisself war arter him."

It was even so. The animal's instinct pierced his master's disguise, and the innocent brute was running toward him at the speed of a race-horse. Days had passed since the two had last been together; and no wonder the faithful animal longed to once again lick his master's kind hand.

He has reached Reeves' side; and, with a loud yelp of delight, he stands on his hind feet, and attempts to lick his master's face.

Simultaneously a hundred fearful yells and whoops rent the air. Reeves was discovered! He saw this as quick as we,

and knowing that nothing now remained for him but to run, he acted upon it at once. A thousand yards yet lay between him and the fort—a fearful distance, for his enemies were less than a hundred paces behind him. To make matters worse, I knew that he possessed not a single weapon—not even as much as a knife.

On he sped, calling loudly to those upon the parapet of the fort to open the stockade gate. He was heard. There was suddenly a commotion among them, and two or three were seen to descend to the palisades.

“Do you think he will make it?” I asked of my companions.

“Impossible to say. Thur must be some tall runners among 'em, or else they'd 'a' fired arter him. Lookee yonder! See! 'Thur's a varmint as 'll cotch him.”

It was somewhat singular that the savages had not fired a single missile at the fugitive. A moment before the trapper's exclamation had been uttered, an Indian was suddenly seen to shoot from out the woods, heading directly for the fugitive. He was a magnificent runner and must certainly if he possessed the bottom overtake the fugitive ere he reached the fort.

When the young savage first started out, dozens of his companions were far in front of him. But he soon overhauled them, and was now between them and Reeves.

It is needless to say that we watched the fearful pursuit with the most intense interest, mingled with tinges of dread, lest our noble-hearted companion should fall a victim to his own foolhardiness. Willingly would I call it by another name, but *that* would none the less, in our readers' eyes, change the character of his attempt. We should always commend true *bravery*; but *recklessness*—never.

Reeves was any thing but fleet of foot. His pursuer, it seemed, took three steps to his one. This, of course, soon told; and we soon perceived that pursued and pursuer were less than a dozen paces apart. At that moment Reeves wheeled round. It was well for him that he did so, for, simultaneously with this movement, the savage whipped out his tomahawk. Another instant, and it was hurled. Reeves ducked, and the weapon glided by him, much too close for comfort's sake, however.

"The tomahawk! Quick! Make for that!" sung out a voice from the fort.

The advice was heeded. Reeves ran toward the weapon, and an instant was sufficient time for him to grasp it, and then face his pursuer.

But he had been anticipated. When his eye again fell upon his pursuer, he was lying upon the ground, struggling in the last throes of death.

The huge dog had borne him to the earth. The animal's teeth were fastened in the savage's trachea, from which blood was streaming in a horrible manner.

Reeves staid there not long. A hundred others were coming toward him at the top of their speed, and he soon was running again toward the fort. The dog kept his hold upon his victim until his last struggle was ended, then joined his master.

They reached the stockade. Its gate was instantly opened, and we had the satisfaction of seeing them pass safely inside.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ATTACK.

Our thoughts now turned to our own situation.

The excitement of the savages which followed this incident was greatly to our advantage, inasmuch as it served to attract the attention of our foes more than ever toward the fort.

As the reader is already aware, it was the intention of the trappers to attempt to gain a position much nearer the fort, in order to frustrate the plan adopted by our enemies. With caution on our part this could be easily carried out, as the heavy timber and brushwood would cover our movements every step.

The only difficulty was this : some of the savages might take it into their heads to search the woods, and thus accidentally fall foul of our trails. They had only to find that of Reeves, follow that, and it would lead them directly to where we were stationed. This drawback was announced by the cunning Mark Cook.

"It ain't likely," he continued, "thet the varmints 'll come thes way, accordin' to thes coon's opeenyun. Still, it's allers the best plan, accordin' to my axperience, to look at both eends.

"The only way we kin look out fur 'em air, let a couple o' us stop hyur ontill we see the reds about to commence thur march. Thin we kin jine the rest o' ye."

The plan was unanimously adopted. Two of the trappers were to remain on the spot we then occupied, and, should our trails be discovered by the savages, they were to signal to us to be on the alert.

Before leaving the spot, curiosity prompted me to look toward the place where lay the corpse of George Garnet. She who had loved him so well had not deserted him. She still lay in the position she had lain when last I saw her—still as death itself. Was it death? Something vague answered yes. Certainly it was not impossible. I am told that grief

kills not in a moment. It is untrue; it often does. I would gladly have watched longer—watched to see if she would give the least sign that life was yet present; but my companions warned me that the time for us to be in motion had arrived and I was forced to gaze in another direction.

The distance between us and the point for which we were to make, was very nearly a hundred rods. It was a small copse of hazel-bushes, just within rifle-shot of the fort.

We pressed forward rapidly, but cautious, lest so much a dry stick should snap beneath our feet. The copse was reached; and after concealing ourselves, we hurriedly cast our eyes once more in the direction of our foes. The excitement was somewhat over, and the savages were again as hard at work as ever. A short time more, and their preparations would be complete. The wagon and its breastwork of logs was just receiving its finishing touches.

Thirty minutes later. The trappers who had been left behind had arrived, and reported that the attack was about to begin.

"Waugh!" said one, "thet Nau-wauna air the smartest red-skin I ever sot eyes on. It air lucky fur them in the fort thet we air hyur, fur thar shootin'-irons won't be worth a plug o' tobaccy, whar they air."

This was true. Protected by the breastwork of logs, the savages could batter down the palisades of the fort with impunity; the bullets of the besieged being as worthless as if fired into the air.

Our enemies are on the move.

"Ho-yo-yehce! Ho-yo-yehce!" peals simultaneously from two hundred voices. It is the Ojibwah war-cry!

Our position is far from theirs, but the level ground between us is unbroken, and we can easily follow their movements. Suddenly, we observe some fifty or more debouch from the forest, and approach the fort at its left angle. As many more proceeded, a moment later, toward the east end. Both parties had thrown aside their blankets, in order that these might not impede their progress, when the moment for further action on their part had arrived.

Thus far the preparations of the besiegers had been undisturbed. Now, however, those stationed inside the fort thought

it high time to show their foes they were well prepared to receive them. Upon the parapet we could see hurried preparations going on. Soon a loud, hissing sound, proceeding from thence, reached our ears, and an object was seen to shoot from the parapet with the rapidity of lightning. It described the arc of a circle in the air, then fell to the ground some fifty rods from the party of savages at the left angle of the fort, exploding with a terrible report. This was evidently a new mode of warfare to the savages; but no doubt having been advised of it by Nau-wauna, they showed not the least evidence of surprise.

“Waugh! a fizzle!” said a trapper.

“Mebbe, hoss; mebbe! But, thet’s the fust shot. Wait till ye’ve seen another, an’ ef thet fails, why, I’ll cotton to ye. Reeves is a feller as ginerally knows what he does, an’ what it air done fur; an’ ef hes rockets—as he tarms ’em—don’t work, so much for the powder wasted.”

Sh-sh-sh-sh-sh! Another of the missiles had been lit. Ha! This time, instead of ascending into the air, it sweeps like a meteor toward the group of savages, burying itself in the ground at their very feet. A tremendous explosion instantly follows. A fearful yell from the savages breaks forth, and they start back, running for the cover of the woods like mad. No, not all. That explosion was the death of at least a dozen of their number, besides wounding many others.

The remainder of the savages, as well as the trappers, look as if petrified. Elated by their success, a loud cheer is given from those in the fort. Hardly knowing what to do, the savages at the east end of the fort still hold their ground. Quickly perceiving this, another of the fearful missiles is lit, and lo! ten or more of our foes are sent to eternity in an instant.

“Thur,” said Raven, “what do ye say now, eh? Do ye think it air a fizzle now, hoss?”

“No,” growled the one addressed.

The savages sought the cover of the forest, and, for some time after, did not venture to show themselves within the clearing. Seeing this, those in the fort restrained their firing.

But matters continued thus not long. The machine which

had been devised by Nau-wauna was seen to be pushed into the opening, behind it stationed almost a score of savages. A loud and vengeful yell from those in the forest rung forth, for now, they doubted not, the fearful weapons of the besieged would be useless.

The clumsy machine was pushed forward slowly, but none the less sure. A rocket is again discharged from the fort. It strikes the pile of logs, explodes—but nothing more. Another yell breaks from the demons. Now, they feel more sure of success than ever. Nau-wauna is standing just at the edge of the opening, and, with words of encouragement, thus cheers them on.

“Thur’s jist eighteen o’ the varmints,” said a trapper, referring to the the savages deputed to commence the attack. “Jist twelve o’ us,” he continued. “Let’s see—twelve from eighteen leaves six. Wagh! we’ll hev to look cussed quick in loadin’ afore the rest o’ the niggers arrive up.”

“Ye’re raythur mistaken, I guess,” said the hunter, Raven. “Looke hyur.”

With these words, he approached me, and coolly drew one of my revolvers from my belt.

“Looke,” he continued. “The doctor has two o’ these—each six shots. How’s thet, eh?”

There was no reply.

“Bill,” I said to the hunter, “are you a good shot with a pistol?”

“Mebbe I am,” was the curt reply.

“Good. Keep the revolver, then, until the fight is over.”

He thanked me; then turned again toward the foe.

Half an hour must have passed—to us it appeared ten times as long—and the savages had arrived not ten feet from the palisades.

Our time for action had come. The savages were not more than thirty rods from our position, thus offering a splendid mark for our rifles. It was judged by the trappers that it would not be the better way for us to fire simultaneously, as, by so doing, two bullets might pierce the same mark.

Mark Cook was the first to fire. As usual, he missed not his aim. The bullet struck the dark breast of one of the besiegers about the region of the heart, and he fell flat upon

his face, dead. Raven fired the next moment, with a like result.

The rest of us soon imitated their example, and to our gratification, not one of us was so unfortunate as to miss his aim. A dozen savages lay upon the ground. Six yet remained.

To our chagrin, those, instead of fleeing, as we had expected they would, jumped nimbly inside the wagon, and lay down upon its bottom, thus sheltering themselves by the side-boards.

What was to be done? Knowing from whence the shots came that had so taken them by surprise, a hundred of the demons were hastening toward us.

It was not long before I had decided what next to do. Calling upon Raven to follow me, I sprung forth from our covert, and ran at the top of my speed for the fort. As I disclosed myself to the view of the savages, a yell louder than any of the rest greets me.

Ha! How I ran. Now it was life or death. The thirty-five rods—it seemed—were passed over in a moment; and I was close to the wagon before the savages knew they were in danger.

They were lying flat upon their faces, and a bullet through the brain of each sent them all in a single moment to eternity.

Lying beside one of the savages was a tomahawk. I seized this, and hit one of the logs that had been piled upon the wagon a fearful blow with the weapon. To my consternation, the handle snapped. At that moment, Raven arrived upon the scene.

“An ax!” he shouted to those inside the fort. “An ax! For God’s sake, fling us an ax!”

The clearing then seemed to swarm with the Indians, but as rocket after rocket was discharged from the fort, their progress was somewhat stayed.

It seemed an age to me, but at length an ax was hurled to us over the palisades. The hunter seized it, and a few tremendous blows rendered the structure useless.

By this time the savages were less than a dozen rods behind us. In vain those upon the parapet rained down bul-

lets upon them, a dozen of the savages had resolved upon our destruction, even should it take a dozen of their own lives in its accomplishment.

"Come," said Raven, springing down from the wagon, "let's cut. The devils 'll be on us in a twinkling."

Not for the fort. No, the gate unbarricaded then, before it could be fastened again, it would be at the mercy of the besiegers. We sprung quickly round the angle of the stockade, and then found ourselves directly facing the river. It seemed that this was our only chance, and we kept on toward it. We reached its bank just as our pursuers again caught sight of us.

I was about to plunge headlong into the stream, when I was prevented by my companion clutching my arm.

"Not hyur! Not hyur!" he said. "Lookee yonder"—pointing down the stream. I followed the direction indicated, and my eye lit upon a canoe, being rapidly paddled toward us by an Indian. I recognized the savage at once—Zach-o-kana!

"It is Zach-o-kana, the Red-ax," I said to the hunter.

"Surer'n shootin'. He'll help us out o' the pickle. Come, run like old Parsimmons!"

While this had been going on, our enemies had rapidly lessened the distance between us. Seeing that we did not plunge into the river, as they had surmised we would, they were almost at a loss how to intercept us. If they did so, it must be at close quarters, for, to our mutual surprise, we saw that not a single savage carried a bow. Each grasped, instead, a tomahawk.

We ran along the bank at the top of our speed. Seeing this, our pursuers endeavored to cut us off, and—succeeded.

"Euchered! by gosh!" said the hunter, in a tone that showed his chagrin. "We'll hev to swim, arter all. Waugh!"

We plunged into the river, and swam rapidly out. Our pursuers reached the bank. Here one or two of them came to a halt, but the rest, bent upon taking us at all hazards, plunged into the stream and swam after us. They made fine progress, but, unhappily for them, there was an obstacle in their way they had failed to notice. This was their outlawed chief, the Red-ax.

The chief was near those savages in the water. He held in his uplifted right hand a tomahawk, guiding the canoe with his left. In vain the savages on shore shout to their companions to return. It is too late. The chief's canoe is in the midst of the swimmers—a few sweeps of his fearful tomahawk, and the tale is ended: the Red-ax had done his work.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

THAT night, a grand assault was made by the savages upon the fort, and was successfully repulsed. Among the slain was found, the following morning, the body of Flying Squirrel, their head chief.

The Ojibwahs, for a time, were heartily tired of war. Repulsed at St. Catherine's, Salem, and New Georgia, they learned to their sorrow that the whites were their superiors at war; and those of the once great tribe that remained, fled further toward the north-west.

As for Nau-wauna, while he lived, his passion for Virginie Du Bois never abated.

One night, a few weeks after peace was again restored, a solitary person was seen prowling about the cabin of M. Du Bois.

He was watched. Those that knew Nau-wauna's character had surmised that he would appear upon the scene ere long. Therefore in order to guard against surprise, a watch was constantly kept about the settlement. Those appointed for this were, Mark Cook, Bill Raven, and myself.

On the night mentioned before, just as the moon had appeared above the trees, we detected the figure stealing from the cover of the woods cautiously into the opening.

"Nau-wauna!" whispered Raven.

The figure stopped once or twice, and listened. Hearing nothing to alarm him, he continued his course toward the cabin. At one end of this was a window, which, it being midsummer, was open. Approaching this, the Indian again stopped to listen, and with the same result as before. He then placed his hands on the sill, and a moment later disappeared inside the cabin.

Ha! Now we had him!

We rose to our feet, and ran toward the cabin. It took

but a moment to reach the window, and, like the Ind'an, dart inside.

Just then, the screams of a woman reached our ears. Oh God! It was the voice of Virginie!

Guided by that we made our way to her room, and entered it. A form brushed against me. I stretched forth my hand, and clutched it. A second later I felt a sting in my left arm, caused by the stab of a knife.

The cat-like eyes of the hunter perceived what was going on. He clutched my antagonist by the throat, and bore him to the floor. There was the report of a pistol-shot, a groan of anguish, and Nau-wauna rolled over in the agonies of death.

THE END.

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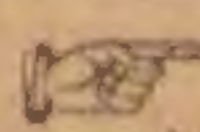
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